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THE BHAGAVAD-GÎTĀ AND  
MODERN SCHOLARSHIP





INTERPRETATIONS OF THE BHAGAVAD-GÎTÂ  
Book I

# THE BHAGAVAD-GÎTÂ AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

By

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LONDON

LUZAC & CO.

46 GREAT RUSSELL STREET, LONDON, W.C.1

1941

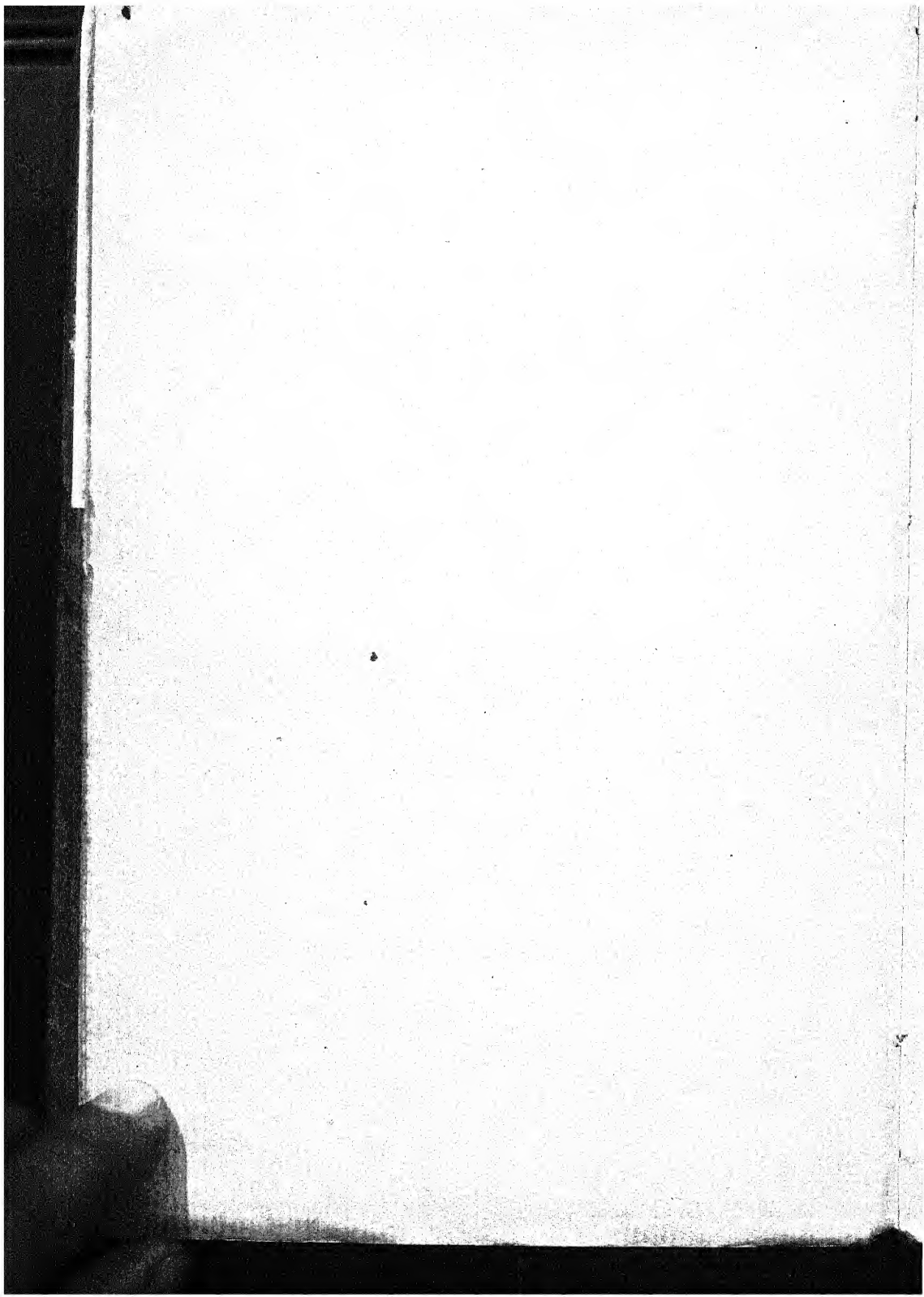
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*Printed in Great Britain*  
*at the BURLEIGH PRESS, Lewin's Mead, BRISTOL*

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WITH REVERENCE AND GRATITUDE

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## PREFACE

(By DR. BETTY HEIMANN, Ph.D., Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Philosophy, formerly of the University of Munich, now on the Staff of the School of Oriental and African Studies.)

ONCE more the Bhagavad-Gîtâ! In spite of the fact that the Bhagavad-Gîtâ has remained through the centuries an inexhaustible source for Indian religious inspiration, we must confess we are a bit tired of getting yet another book on the Bhagavad-Gîtâ. There are so many translations (interpretations) of this religious poem written once and again in the West and the East, and perhaps none of them will satisfy us completely because most of them are merely concerned on rendering (interpolating), abstract fixed terms; hardly the full potential dynamics of the verbal roots concerned with all their productive ambiguity displayed is ever grasped.

But just this feeling of reluctance against another study on the Bhagavad-Gîtâ gives a justification for Mr. Roy's new attempt. He makes an extensive research of all the former interpretations of Western and Indian scholars. In so doing, he supplies in his *Bhagavad-Gîtâ and Modern Scholarship* an immanent history of Indology of the last centuries. Mr. Roy propounds their interpretations and provides a critical survey of the views of scholars like A. Weber, Deussen, Garbe, Hopkins, Telang, Bhandarkar and others. Perhaps it may be said that among themselves they have already in books and essays sufficiently discussed and confronted their respective views. Other studies of Mr. Roy's will, however, be generally welcomed: he revives also the all too quickly forgotten elucidations of earlier scholars: the Humboldts, Max Müller and the like.

Beside these historical researches Mr. Roy sets forth valuable dogmatic problems treated by those scholars. He refutes with good scientific reasons the assumed clash between pantheistic and theistic dogmas in the Bhagavad-Gîtâ—no such strict distinction can be made between *Paramârtha* (pantheistic-cosmic) and *laukika* (theistic) views. Secondly Mr. Roy's assertion that the Bhagavad-

## PREFACE

Gítá cannot be taken as a sectarian (Bhágavata) text is definitely convincing. Further, I would like specially to emphasize that Mr. Roy hints to a most important philological-philosophical problem not generally faced: the fixed terms of the later Indian philosophical systems are to be found in the Bhagavad-Gítá still *in statu nascendi* (about this an essay of mine is shortly to be published).

From all these above-given reasons we may eagerly look forward to Mr. Roy's intended series on the historical, literary, religious and philosophical problems involved in the Bhagavad-Gítá.

B. HEIMANN

London,  
December, 1938.



## THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

THE first part of this work on the *Gîtá and Modern Scholarship* was written about 25 years ago, when the author came across Garbe's German translation of the Bhagavad-Gîtá with a long Introduction, justifying his theory of interpolations and his distinction of an earlier Gîtá of 200 B.C. and a later Gîtá of A.D. 200. Parts II and III were conceived and planned seven or eight years later, when the author was in charge of the teaching of Indian Philosophy in the University of Dacca. It was realized however, in course of the progress of the writing of Parts II and III, that the plan of the work could not be accomplished without a study of the age of the Gîtá and the religious, social and intellectual environments of the Poet-Philosopher who composed this Song Celestial. Again, the doubts of eminent scholars as regards the integrity of the text and genuine origin of its teachings from the root and soil of the Upaniṣads could not be finally disposed of without a separate treatment of the contents of the various chapters of this Bible of the Hindus, and without discovering the thread of unity among the apparently conflicting components of the poem, after a systematic interpretation of the 700 verses of the Gîtá in the light of its central theme and essential spirit of the teachings of the poet. This meant expansion of the original scheme into three or more connected volumes. Meanwhile the work suffered from interruptions due to the pre-occupation of the author in different fields of educational activity in the Indian Educational Service, as Inspector of Schools and Principal of a Government college, which left little or no leisure for thinking or writing on academic and scholarly subjects after heavy duties of administration. Hence the delay in sending the work to the Press. The long interval between the first conception of the Book and its final execution has, however, been profitably utilized by careful revision and consolidation of the results of the author's later studies and maturer reflections. The other two connected volumes, viz., one on the Gîtá and its Background and the other on the Interpretation of the Gîtá in the light of modern thought, have

## THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

also been nearing completion in the meantime. The last Book on the Philosophy and Religion of the Gîtá has yet to be written, and this must wait till the author's works on the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads and on the Unity of Indian and European Thought are published.

The grateful thanks of the author are due to the late Prof. Paul Deussen and the late Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhándárkar, the two great Indologists, whose contributions to the study of ancient Indian philosophy and religion are of inestimable value and whose original researches in this field were the sources of inspiration for the main task of the author. The first two Books on the Gîtá in the present series are therefore dedicated to the sacred memory of these two pioneers in the science of Indology.

To Prof. A. Berriedale Keith, the author is highly indebted for the valuable suggestions obtained, while the manuscript was still in its raw and fluid condition, as it were, and Prof. S. N. Das Gupta, Principal, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, is also to be thanked sincerely for his going through part of the manuscript and encouraging the author by the support lent to the major conclusions of the first Book. The author regrets that the late Prof. Mahes Chandra Ghosh of Hazaribagh College, who had a reputation for vast erudition and sound and clear thinking, and who also helped with his useful notes and suggestions after going through the manuscript, could not see the book in its final form. I am equally indebted to the large number of Indian and European scholars whose works and articles I have consulted in preparing this book, even though I have to differ from their view-points in many cases. Lastly, I offer my grateful thanks to Dr. Betty Heimann for her kindly favouring me with a Preface.

If an apology were needed for the appearance of a new book on the Gîtá and its interpretations, the following considerations may suffice to provide ample justification for a novel venture of the kind undertaken by the author of the present volume :

(1) Since the publication of the Sacred Books of the East, edited by Max Müller, a new science of Indology, based on the mass of materials collected by a respectable army of pioneer workers in the vast field of Indian philosophy, religion, culture and antiquities, has developed, and several volumes of history of ancient Indian literature have been published. It appeared to the author that time was ripe for a new orientation of the study of Indian

## THE AUTHOR'S APOLOGY

scriptures in the light of modern scholarship and in harmony with modern thought. The Gítá is almost like the Bible of the Hindus, and it is meet and proper that this sacred song Divine should receive the same critical and rational treatment in the hands of modern scholars that the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible have secured from generations of eminent theologians and ecclesiastical historians.

(2) The Gítá is at once the root and the flower and the fruit of the ancient Vedic and Upaniṣadic culture and of its harmony with non-Vedic faiths and non-Aryan practices. An historical-comparative and critical-constructive study of the Gítá and its relation to the Upaniṣads, the Mahábhárata, the Puráṇas, and the systems of philosophy and religion that arose and developed in ancient India, is sure to throw a flood of light on the history of Indian thought and culture in general and on the development of religious life and philosophical genius of the Hindus in particular.

(3) The present volume is the first attempt at a comprehensive and systematic review of the results of researches on the Gítá and the Epic Mahábhárata, made during the last three-quarters of a century by such competent scholars of the West as Max Müller, Hopkins, Barth, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Weber, Holzmann, Dahlmann, Schröder, Deussen, Garbe, Winternitz, Macnicol and others, as well as by eminent Indian scholars like Bhándárkar, Bankimchandra, Telang, Tilak, Subba Rao, Vaidya and others. The work has been brought up to date, by inclusion of the fruits of labours of two great historians of Indian Philosophy, viz., Prof. Radhakrishnan and Dr. Surendra Nath Das Gupta, although the major portion of the present volume was prepared before the publication of these two great works on Indian Philosophy.

(4) It has been the earnest endeavour of the writer to approach the subject of his study with an open mind, without being biassed or prejudiced in any way by the orthodox commentators of old nor influenced by the sectarian interpreters of the Gítá like Bankimchandra, Bala Gangadhar Tilak and other modern scholars, so that an impartial and critical enquiry into the question of the origin and nature of the contents of the Gítá may yield to the students of the Gítá whatever is of permanent value and is worthy of universal acceptance. It will be seen that as an outcome of this dispassionate and disinterested investigation the teachings of the Gítá are not associated with any particular sect of religion nor with

any particular school of philosophy, but present in a nutshell the quintessence of a rational, liberal and universalistic and spiritualistic culture that reconciles the interests of the body, mind and soul, and harmonizes the conflicting claims of science or philosophy (*jñān*), love and devotion (*Bhakti*), and duty and service (*Karma-Yoga*). From this point of view, the *Gītā* may be really regarded as the gospel of love and peace and goodwill among the nations and races of mankind, as the one scripture of the union of the East and the West, as the cementing bond or the golden link that holds together and synthesizes the finest and noblest elements of Indo-British culture and Euro-Asian civilization, a consummation towards which the whole creation seems to be moving.

The conclusions of each Part of the Book are summarized in the last section of each Part. Thus paragraph 81 gives the results of the first part, relating to the theories of interpolations in the Text (*vide* section V, Chapter III, Part I); paragraph 230, under section III, Chapter VI, of Part II sets forth conclusions of the second Part of the book, concerning the relation between the *Gītā* and the Mahābhārata. Part III of the volume deals with the connection between the *Gītā* and the Bhāgavata religion, and the conclusions on the same are to be found in paragraphs 342-345 under Section V, of the Chapter III thereof. Lastly, the positive results of the whole book are given in paragraphs 346-366 of the concluding section, which also includes the points of agreement and difference between the views of the author and those of the two reputed writers on Indian Philosophy, Prof. Radhakrishnan and Dr. S. N. Das Gupta.

It must be added that the present volume is only an Introduction to the study of the *Gītā*. To prepare the ground for a systematic interpretation of the contents of the various chapters of the *Gītā*, it will be necessary to undertake a discussion of the religious, social, moral and intellectual atmosphere and environments, in the midst of which the poet-philosopher of the *Gītā* was born and brought up, and the age or the period of the religious and philosophical history of India in which this song celestial was composed. This will form the subject-matter of the second volume to be named *The Bhagavad-Gītā and Its Background*, and this again will be followed by the third volume on the *Interpretation of the Gītā in the light of Modern Thought*.

In quoting the verses of the *Gītā* in this and the coming volumes,



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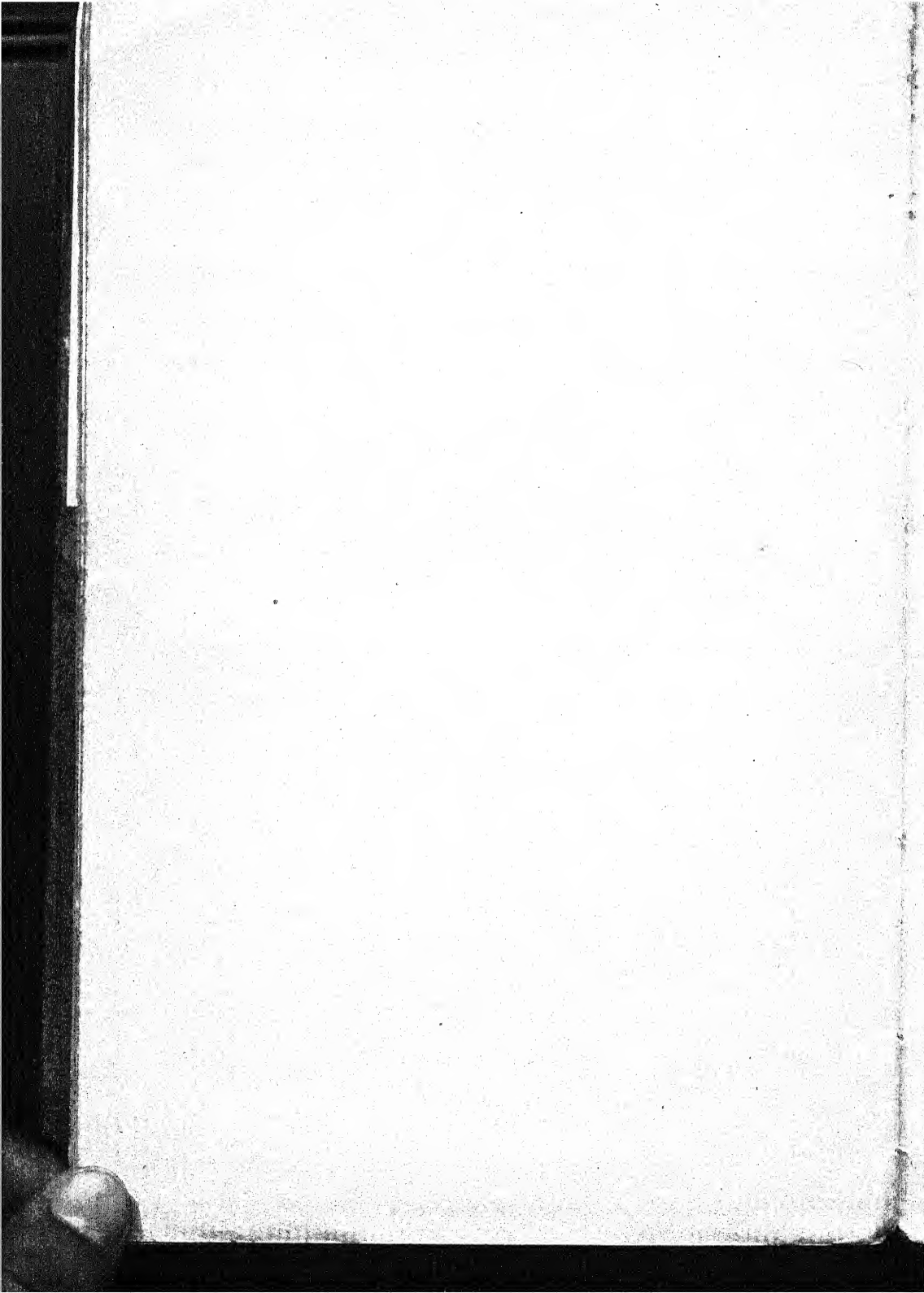
the English translation of the poem made by the late Dr. Annie Besant in her pocket edition will generally be followed ; but as her translation was not free from error, corrections and modifications will have to be made therein. The translations of Telang and Tattvabhushan will also be utilized occasionally. Most of the quotations from the German Indologists in this book are translations from the original made by the undersigned himself, as no English translations are yet available in most cases. Garbe's Introduction to his translation of the *Gîtá*, which was subjected to my severe scrutiny as early as 1914 and which is the main target of my criticism in Part I of this volume, has since been translated into English by Utgikar and published by the Bhándárkar Research Institute. Mr. Tilak's *Gîtá-Rahasya*, which has been brought under the critical review of the author in Parts II and III of the present work, was originally written in Marathi, and later on translated into Hindi, Bengali and English. It is from the Hindi translation that I collected the materials for my discussion in the present treatise before the publication of the Bengali and English translations of this monumental work.

Part I of this book, which is the earliest foundation of the whole series, was published in several instalments during the year 1935, in the columns of the *Indian Messenger* of Calcutta, for which the author is grateful to the Editor.

While the full significance of the task undertaken in this volume cannot be realized until all the volumes are published, the author will consider his labours amply repaid if the methods of his treatment of the various problems connected with the study of the *Gîtá* as well as the solutions offered by him serve to stimulate the interests of a wider circle of readers in the eternal verities and universal and absolute values, which are embodied in this sacred poem known as the Song Divine.

S. C. ROY.

Cambridge,  
12th February, 1939.





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PART ONE

THEORIES OF INTERPOLATIONS IN THE GĪTĀ





## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### SECTION I. THE SCOPE OF OUR ENQUIRY

1. The Bhagavad-Gítá has been for centuries revered as a sacred book by the Hindus. Its contents are believed to have been revealed by God Himself in the form of His incarnation Krishna. The educated Indians of the modern age with their critical spirit do not indeed admit the claims of the Gítá to possess infallible truths about human life and destiny, nor do they accept the unconditional authority of this scripture, but still it is generally admitted that if the author of any book can in any sense lay claim to a divine revelation or to an inspiration of the Supreme Spirit in his writings, the writer of this Divine song has pre-eminently deserved this right, in virtue of the lofty ethical teachings, the sublime religious conceptions and the high philosophical truths which permeate the whole text. One of the most striking facts about the contents of the Bhagavad-Gítá is that, though the text has been traditionally regarded as one of the three *Prasthānas* of the Vedānta school of Philosophy and though as a religious scripture it has been generally accepted as specially suited to the spiritual culture of the sect of Vaiṣṇavas or Bhāgavatas, the teachings of the poem as a whole have been held in high esteem by almost all the philosophical schools and all the religious sects of India. The reason is not far to seek. The Gítá represents in the best and the most beautiful manner the spirit of India, the spirit of synthesis and reconciliation, in so far as it tries to bring together into a systematic and harmonious whole widely divergent philosophical theories of the Universe and a large variety of religious practices, as well as conflicting types of ethical doctrines and mental disciplines. Western thought has made us familiar with the incompatibility of Poetry with Philosophy, of Religion with Metaphysic, of Pantheism with Theism, of Monism with Dualism, of formalistic with teleological ethics and of Hedonism with

Energism. In our country the bitter contest between the world-views of Vedánta and Sánkhyā-Yoga, between the claims of Jñāna (Knowledge), Bhakti (Love) and Karma (Action) as the ways to salvation, has run through the whole history of philosophical speculation and religious life. It is the distinctive characteristic of the Bhagavad-Gítá that it has made an attempt to combine these apparently contradictory pairs of antitheses into a single systematic world-view. Thus Garbe speaks of the genuinely Indian inclination to combine philosophy and religion (*die echt indische Neigung Religion und Philosophie zu combinieren*) as a mark of the author of the Gítá, while according to Wilhelm von Humboldt and Leopold von Schröder, "it is the only philosophical poem in the world-literature, which exactly corresponds to this designation, i.e., which is really philosophical and is yet at the same time a genuine poem with highly poetical rhythm."

2. Modern scholars are sometimes bewildered by the variety of conflicting philosophical conceptions in the Gítá; and in order to account for what seems to them nothing short of irreconcilable contradictions, they put forward equally bewildering theories of interpolation or intermixture in the text. Adolf Holzmänn, Edward Hopkins and Richard Garbe, for instance, hold that since the Gítá contains elements of Sánkhyā-Yoga with a theistic conception of God alongside the doctrines of Vedánta with all its pantheistic notions, one of these views must be the original and the other a later accretion. Winternitz also says, "The fact that the Gítá in its present form has become and remains to this day, the most popular religious text-book is not to a small extent to be ascribed to this very circumstance, that in it mutually contradictory philosophical doctrines and religious conceptions have been combined into a 'mixture'" (*mischmach*). But if these scholars had read our text in the light of the special characteristic of Indian civilization and of the history of religious development in India, they would have discovered that in spite of its apparent mixture and eclecticism, there is an essential and systematic unity in the scripture and that the various philosophical, religious and ethical views set forth in it have been arranged in a certain order and gradation of importance, to suit the capacity and training of those for whom they are intended. When Garbe says, "One must know that Hinduism is a religion which is in constant flux, which can absorb everything with whatever it comes in contact, as it has, for example,

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taken within itself the cults and the gods of the Indian aborigines to a large extent," he has indirectly hit upon a unique and distinctive feature of the Indian spirit and the Indian civilization in general. India has from times immemorial been the home of a variety of religious and philosophical speculations, and in virtue of the wealth of varied experiences in religious and speculative life, she has developed an extraordinary power of assimilating all that is best and highest in every religion and philosophy. Thanks to the divinely-bestowed blessings of the spirit of synthesis, reconciliation and toleration, she has always made accommodations for diverging types of spiritual culture and conflicting systems of theology or philosophy, and sought to correct and supplement the one by the other.

3. It is this characteristic of the Indian Mind that Monier Williams notes in the preface to his *Brahmanism and Hinduism* and describes in the following words:—

"Hinduism is receptive and all-comprehensive, claiming to be the one religion of Humanity, of human nature and of the entire world. It cares not to oppose the progress of any other system, for it has no difficulty in including all other religions in its all-embracing arms and ever-widening field. In real truth Hinduism has something to offer which is suited to all minds. Its very strength is in its infinite adaptability to the infinite diversity of human characters and human tendencies. It has its highly spiritual and abstract side suited to the Metaphysician and Philosopher, its practical and concrete side suited to the man of affairs and the man of the world, its æsthetic and ceremonial side suited to the man of poetic feeling and imagination, its quiescent and contemplative side suited to the man of peace and lover of seclusion. Nay, it holds out the right hand of brotherhood to nature-worshippers, demon-worshippers, animal-worshippers and tree-worshippers and fetish-worshippers."

The Gîtá is both a product and monument of this reconciling, all-absorbing spirit of the Indian civilization, and viewed in this light, all its contradictions can be easily removed, and all its difficulties satisfactorily solved. It is thus that such mutually antagonistic schools of philosophy as those of Sankara and Ramanuja have been able to comment on the entire text of the Gîtá, each in its own way without recognizing any foreign elements in it and without needing the support of a theory of interpolation. Of

course, as Wilhelm von Humboldt observed long ago, the arrangement of the topics in the dialogue is not very strictly systematic or "scientific" as we call it, because, to quote the scholar just mentioned, "here speaks a wise man out of the fullness and inspiration of his knowledge and feeling, not a philosopher disciplined in a school." Like the R̥sis of the Upaniṣads, our author had an intuitive insight into the highest ethical and metaphysical truths and into the essential unity of all the systems, but was not concerned with the task of proving or demonstrating the same methodically and critically.

4. About fifty years ago an eminent Indian scholar, Mr. K. T. Telang, writing about the Bhagavad-Gîtā, remarked: "It is almost impossible to lay down even a single proposition respecting an important matter connected with the Bhagavad-Gîtā about which any consensus can be said to exist."<sup>1</sup> In spite of all the progress that has been made in the field of researches in Indology during the last half a century, this remark of Telang holds good even to this day. Modern scholars are still groping in the dark as to the question of the integrity of the Gîtā in its present form, for some of them hold it to be a genuine product of its original author, while others suspect that the text has passed through various stages of systematic interpolation. If according to the learned Pandits of the orthodox Hindu community the Gîtā has always been from the beginning, as it still is, a genuine portion of the great epic Mahābhārata, there are equally erudite critics who suggest that the Gîtā and many other similar episodes with philosophical and religious contents, were originally independent treatises, which were later on incorporated into and have been absorbed by the Great Epic in course of the various stages of its development and redaction. While some thinkers find in this philosophical poem nothing but the pantheism of the Vedānta, based on the unity of Brahma and Atman and other essential doctrines of the earliest Upaniṣads, there are others who with equal cogency argue that the philosophical foundation of the teachings of this scripture must be sought not in the Monism or Pantheism of the Vedānta but in the dualistic and theistic Sāṅkhya-Yoga. Lastly, most of the ancient and modern commentaries on the Gîtā start with the assumption that it is a text-book of the

<sup>1</sup> Telang's Introduction to the Translation of the Bhagavad-Gîtā and other Texts in the S. B. E. 1882.



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Bhāgavata School of Vaiṣṇavism intended to glorify Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, who was supposed to be a Divine Incarnation, and is still honoured as the religious founder of a powerful and influential sect of Hinduism, while the spirit as well as the contents of the teachings of the Gītā, both in their philosophical and religious aspects, lend themselves easily to a non-sectarian interpretation, and one may naturally doubt if the supposed Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā is well-founded or justified at all.

5. In what follows I propose to discuss some of these problems and difficulties relating to the study of the Bhagavad-Gītā in the light of modern scholarship and according to the critical-historical method. I shall try to arrive, if possible, at a satisfactory solution of some fundamental questions, viz., (1) Whether the Gītā is a unitary whole, and a genuine product of one master mind, or has had a patch-work origin and suffered from systematic interpolations from time to time. (2) Whether the Gītā was an integral part of the epic Mahābhārata and composed by the same author, or it was an independent Upaniṣad, subsequently inserted in the epic. (3) Whether the Gītā is a product of the Bhāgavata sect of religion, and (4) whether the Vedānta or Sāṅkhya-Yoga system has anything to do with the philosophical foundations of the Gītā.

6. As we cannot determine the relation of the Gītā to the Mahābhārata, the Upaniṣads and to the various philosophical and religious schools of India without ascertaining the date of its composition it will be necessary to enter into a study of the age and environments in which the poet of this sacred text was born and brought up.

7. It is not my aim to give an elaborate exposition or critical estimate of the philosophy and the religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā, but rather to prepare the way for a systematic interpretation of its philosophical and religious teachings by studying the background—intellectual, social and moral—from which it originated, by settling some of the preliminary difficulties and solving a few of the vital problems which beset the path of every earnest enquirer and affect the view of every scholar. Our work may thus be regarded more as a prolegomena to, than as a critique or a systematic study of, the philosophy and religion of the Gītā. At the same time, it is not my intention to offer to the readers of this book merely destructive criticism or purely negative results by setting forth my differences with eminent scholars. On the contrary, I shall earnestly endeavour throughout my treatment to discover the fundamental

unity of the Poem, the genius of its author, the central theme of his divine song and the essential spirit of its teachings. All the labours of my investigations will thus be directed towards the attainment of this positive result on the constructive side.

## SECTION II. INTEGRITY OF THE TEXT OF THE PRESENT GĪTĀ

8. That the great epic of India, the Mahābhārata, in its present form, is not the work of a single author, but rather an accumulation of the compositions of many poets around a central theme, and has been from time to time handled by different interpolators is now admitted to be an unquestionable fact. The Bhagavad-Gītā being an episode of the Mahābhārata, the question naturally arises whether the Gītā formed a part of the original Mahābhārata or was a later addition, and whether the Gītā itself has escaped the hands of interpolators. The answer to these questions is very important, as our method of interpreting the Gītā will depend on the nature of its relations to the Mahābhārata and on the integrity or otherwise of the text of the Gītā itself.

9. Let us now take up the second question first, viz., whether the Gītā has been subjected to the same system of interpolations which has fallen to the lot of the Mahābhārata. Mr. Telang is of opinion that "the text of the Gītā is now exactly in the condition in which it left the hands of the author." Many other scholars like Schlegel, Lassen, Pratapchandra Roy also agree in holding this view. At first sight it seems theoretically impossible that our text should escape the fate of the whole epic, whether we consider the Gītā to have been an integral part of the epic or believe the former to have been inserted in the latter by foreign interpolators at a subsequent age. For the more beautiful and the more renowned a poem, the stronger the temptation of other poets to introduce something of their own thought and imagination into it, especially when the poem is a work of highly religious significance and when the interpolators are actuated by the party spirit or sectarian interests. There is also a somewhat decisive evidence in favour of this theoretical consideration. We have a verse at the end of one of the commentaries of the Bhagavad-Gītā, which tells us that the total number of verses uttered by Kṛṣṇa is 620, that by Arjuna is 57, that by Sanjaya 67 and by Dhṛtarāṣṭra is 1. There should be thus 745 verses in the Gītā all told. But in the present



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text we find only 700 verses—of which one is put in the mouth of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, 40 in the mouth of Sanjaya, 85 of Arjuna, and 574 of Kṛṣṇa, so that we have 45 verses missing. Telang has also noticed this discrepancy and holds it to be inexplicable.<sup>1</sup>

10. If it can be proved that the Gītā was originally an Upaniṣad independent of the Mahābhārata, it will follow of course as a necessary corollary that at the time of its insertion in the Mahābhārata some changes especially in the beginning and the end of the text must have been introduced in order to fit it into the new surroundings. But apart from such inevitable changes and some isolated cases of interpolation, our poem seems to have retained essentially the same form and content as it had in the original, and we may so far say with Telang that the text "has been preserved with religious care." I am also inclined to agree with Wilhelm von Humboldt, whose scholarship and insight as well as appreciative study of the Gītā entitle him to a reverent hearing. He says, "Since any course is not methodically followed, but discussions on isolated points are often conducted in a very loose connection with one another, the arrangement of the poem must have very much favoured isolated interpolations from foreign pieces of other poems and of other ages," but "there appears to me nothing to be present in the whole poem, which stands really in contradiction with one another." Thus he concludes: "The various songs (chapters) proceed from the same author, even the division into chapters (or songs) is, to my mind, throughout no later arrangement but the work of the poet himself." Even if some isolated elements in the Gītā appeared to be irreconcilable with one another, one should not dogmatically decide in favour of the retention of the one, as belonging to the original nor critically set aside the other as a foreign accretion. For, to quote Max Müller's words in a similar connection, "Where we can never hope to gain access to the original documents, it is almost a duty to discourage the work of reconstructing an old text by so-called conjectural emendation or critical omission."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover our ideas of compatibility and contradiction, of agreement and difference, of consistency and inconsistency cannot be

<sup>1</sup> According to Tilak, this verse must be an interpolation as it occurs only in the Bombay edition of the Mahābhārata and is absent in the Calcutta and other editions and is not recognized by Nilakantha (*vide* Gītā Rahasya Appendix).

<sup>2</sup> Introduction to the Translation of the Upaniṣads in the S.B.E.

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applicable to the products of a very ancient time, the intellectual atmosphere of which was widely different from our own.

### SECTION III. THEORIES OF INTERPOLATIONS IN THE GĪTĀ, AS HELD BY HOPKINS, HOLZMANN AND GARBE

11. Nevertheless some Western scholars have maintained that our poem has in course of time gone through radical transformations and that we must distinguish accordingly between an older and a younger Bhagavad-Gītā. Hopkins, for example, speaks of the Gītā as a Kṛṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuite poem, which again was perhaps a later Upaniṣad. Holzmann likewise sees here the Vaiṣṇava re-handling of a pantheistic poem (*Vishnuitische Umarbeitung eines pantheistischen Gedichts*), while according to Garbe it was a Kṛṣṇaite poem founded on Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy, which has later on been Vedāntized. All these Indologians start from the assumption that the Gītā is a text-book of religious instruction for a particular sect, viz., for the Bhāgavatas or Vaiṣṇavas, and that the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā is the same person as Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa of the Bhāgavatas. Besides, Holzmann and Garbe also assume that the theological ideas of the poem are strikingly in contradiction with one another, theistic and pantheistic teachings being interwoven in the text without any systematic connection. Garbe is so firmly convinced of the truth of his theory that he has risked the bold adventure of exactly dividing the later from the older or the original part of the Gītā, so that in his German translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā those parts which are considered by him to have been later additions are printed in smaller types. Now, these theories of interpolation, as held by Holzmann and Garbe, are so prejudicial to a proper understanding of our text, that we must examine the various arguments in support of these theories in detail in order to show on what insecure foundation they are based. As the pre-suppositions underlying both these theories are the same and as moreover Garbe's treatment of the problem appears to me to be more exhaustive and scientific, I shall confine myself chiefly to the consideration of the views set forth by this last-named Indologist.

12. The main reasons, which have led Garbe to distinguish between an older and a younger version in the Gītā or between an earlier original Gītā and a later remodelled Gītā, are these :  
(1) The present Gītā contains a mixture of elements of Theism

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and Pantheism, which are mutually contradictory. (2) The principal speaker in the dialogue is Kṛṣṇa, who declares himself to be an incarnation of God and is accepted as such by the theistic religion of Bhāgavatas, but the pantheistic passages of the text hardly fit in with this theistic setting. (3) The systems of Sāṅkhya and Yoga are expressly mentioned in the Gītā, and the concepts and doctrines of these systems play a very prominent part in its philosophical and religious teachings, by the side of which the Vedānta philosophy with its doctrines of Brahma and Māyā is introduced here and there and seems to form an unnecessary element of discord and inconsistency. (4) Besides, there are verses in the Gītā which conflict with each other in their thought or interrupt the sequence of ideas in the context.

All these contradictions can be removed, so thinks Garbe, if we hold the Vedāntic and Pantheistic portions to be interpolations and treat some verses supporting sacrificial rites and containing elements of Mīmāṃsā philosophy to be later additions, and regard the original Gītā to be a product of the Bhāgavata religion based on the Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy.

We shall now examine each of these grounds of Garbe's theory of interpolations.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGINAL GĪTĀ AND LATER ADDITIONS (GARBE'S THEORY EXAMINED)

#### SECTION I. MIXTURE OF THEISM AND PANTHEISM IN THE GĪTĀ

13. The whole character of the poem, says Garbe, is in its plan as well as in its execution predominantly theistic. A personal God, Kṛṣṇa appears in the form of a human hero, delivers his instructions, demands from the hearer besides the performance of duty, devotion and reverential love towards him before all things, reveals by his special grace his super-earthly, but still human form. Beside this form of God, which is as personal as possible, and which predominates the whole poem, there stands sometimes the impersonal, neutral Brahman, the Absolute as the highest principle. Now Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself that he is the only, the highest God, who has created the world and all beings and who rules everything, and at another time he communicates the doctrines of Brahma and Māyā. Both these forms of belief are dealt with in such a way almost throughout the poem as if there were no distinction at all between them, whether according to words or according to contents (i.e., verbal or real).

14. Setting aside for the present the view of Kṛṣṇa as a God incarnate and keeping before our eyes the general ground-work of the Gītā, viz., the juxtaposition of Pantheism and Theism, or of the doctrine that all is one and the doctrine of a world-creating all-ruling God, one may point out that for the Indians these two are really one, being mutually supplementary to the same world-view. Both these ideas have jointly played a large part throughout the whole religious history of India, and that is why to a European investigator, our religion and philosophy sound so strange, as if two different minds ruled the same domain. In fact the Vedānta philosophy, which finds expression in the Upaniṣads and in the Brahmasūtras of Bādarāyana contain the notion of an immanent, impersonal Brahma, which is identical with the world and the soul, as well as that of a transcendent, personal Brahma

different from the world and the soul, and conceives of them both as one and the same. If the combination of these apparently contradictory forms of thought were a proof of re-handling and additions in a text, then we must regard the whole of the Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic literature as well as the Vedānta Sūtra as throughout re-handled and profusely interpolated.<sup>1</sup>

15. Thus the so-called contradictions relating to Theism and Pantheism in the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā do not require any assumption of re-handling, but rather prove its intimate connection with the thoughts of the Upaniṣads. The relation between the Gītā and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad is particularly striking, for in the former, exactly as in the latter, theistic and pantheistic ideas are placed beside one another, and the Sāṅkhya and Yoga are not only mentioned by names, but also the apparently Sāṅkhya doctrines of Prakṛti and Puruṣa (with the addition however, of God as the third), of the three Guṇas, of the knowledge of the distinction between Puruṣa and Prakṛti as the way to liberation and of the practice of meditation, are taught here just as in the Gītā in close connection with Pantheism. In the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad exactly as in the Gītā, we have the representation of a Personal God under the names of Rudra, Hara, Devadeva and Isa, who creates and rules all beings and who is distinguished from *prakṛti* and the human soul, and at the same time the Vedāntic doctrines of the all-pervading, all-comprehending Brahma and of Māyā or cosmic illusion placed side by side. As in the Gītā so in this Upaniṣad, the author speaks of the reverential love towards God and Divine grace in one place, and of liberation from the cosmic illusion and of attaining the state of Brahman in another place. No wonder that Weber holds the Gītā and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad

<sup>1</sup> I can quote a number of verses from the Upaniṣads to illustrate the truth of my statement. For example:

Theism (Transcendence)	Pantheism (Immanence)
1. Katha Up. 2.20 : 2.23 : 4.9 : 5.2-5 : 5.9-15 : 6.3.	Katha Up. 4.10-11.
2. Mundaka Up. 2. 1. 2-3 : 2.1.7, 3.1.1-3.	Mundaka 1.1.7 : 2.1.2 : 2.1.4. 2.2.11.
3. Isa. Up. 4.5.8. (last half) 16.	Isa. 6.7.8. (first part) 16.
4. Kena Up. 1.2-8 : 2.1-3.	Kena 2.1.5.
5. Svetāśvatara Up. 1.3, 8-12 : 11.15. III. 1-4, 7-8, 10.12.14.17-20.	Seveta. 1.7, 15-16. II.16-17. III. 9,11. 15-16. 21.
6. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up. 1-3.7.15 : 3.8.9 : 4.4.22 : (1st Part).	Bṛhadāra. 1.2.4-5 : 2.4.14 : 4.4.19-20 : 3.8. 11. 4.4. 23.
7. Chhāndogya Upaniṣad :— 6.12.1-3 (quoted from Rgveda X 90.3) 6.2.2-3, 6.3.2-3 : 8.12.	Chhand. 6.1.3-4 (did you ask for . . . just clay 7.25.2) : 6.8.1-6 : 3.14.1. 3.14.4.



to be examples of the same species. In *Indische Studien* II (1863) 394 (which is quoted with approval by Holzmann and Garbe), Weber says that the Gītā can be regarded in any case only as a putting together of pieces which are in part of highly different character. It is the only specimen of its kind which was known to us till now; recently we have come to know several similar writings, e.g., Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad which is essentially of similar contents, though in an older form.

16. As to the mixture of Monism and Dualism or of Vedānta and Sāṅkhya-Yoga in Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad and the view arising from it that it contains an older and younger part, we find a vigorous refutation of such assumptions by Max Müller in the preface to his translation of the Upaniṣads (S.B.E. II. Introduction). His arguments apply equally well in the case of the Gītā. Moreover, I would like to know what kind of explanation would be offered by Weber, Holzmann and Garbe for the following facts, viz., (1) The same Yājñavalkya who stands at the head of monistic idealism as the father of the Vedānta philosophy, also speaks so energetically and inspiringly of a *God* who is distinguished from the world and the individual and who rules both. (2) The father of Svetaketu, the famous teacher of Vedāntic principle, "Thou art that," also instructs on the creation of the world out of the existing One. (3) In the redeeming Wisdom imparted by Yama to Nachiketas both pantheistic and theistic views are combined. (4) One and the same verse in the Isa Upaniṣad 8, weaves together the conceptions of the impersonal or neutral and of the personal and providential God. Will these scholars maintain that in all the places cited above, there are juxta-positions of pieces of a highly different character, and Vedāntic transformations of originally theistic elements, or *vice versa*? Evidently there can be no talk of such things here. Why, then, should we assume an interpolation and rehandling in the cases of the Gītā and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad?

17. We must not assume that the sages of ancient India were ignorant of any distinction between a personal and an impersonal conception of God or between theism and pantheism. For even in Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad III. 4, we find the Brahmins asking Yājñavalkya to explain the immanent, not-transcendent<sup>1</sup> Brahma which as soul is within all, and the Gītā XII. also asks. "Those

<sup>1</sup> Literally 'visible and not visible' in the text.



who worship thee (i.e., a personal God) in constant devotion and love and those who worship the Eternal and the unmanifest (i.e., the neutral Brahma), which of these two classes are the more proficient in Yoga"? But notwithstanding the consciousness of this distinction, our sages firmly advocated both the views, because for them a distinction in thought did not signify a separation in reality. Instead of converting a contrast into a contradiction, they had rather brought the mutually opposed principles to a systematic unity, by recognizing both the elements to be different points of view of the same reality and therefore equally valuable.

18. That the reconciliation of Transcendence and Immanence has always been a characteristic of the Upaniṣads and that the Gītā owes the supposed contradiction in thought to its close relation with the Upaniṣadic school of the Vedānta and not to the mixture of Theism and Pantheism through an interpolation—this will be evident to anyone who casts a glance on the Brahmasūtras of Bādarāyana, as annotated by Sankara himself. Even in the definition of Brahma as that from which is the origin, etc. of the universe (*Janma ddi asya yatah I. 1. 2*), as the cause of the origin, the preservation and the destruction of the world, there is contained the germ of both the conceptions, theistic and pantheistic, in so far as the causality of Brahma can be taken either in the sense of mere material or mere efficient cause. The Sūtras I, 4, 23-27, II. 1, 25-29, deal explicitly with just this problem. These sūtras show how Bādarāyana, following the scriptures, presents the transcendent character of Brahma quite as unmistakably as the immanent one. But how one and the same being could be at the same time both the material and the efficient cause and how this Brahman, being itself indivisible, could transform itself into the world and yet continue unaffected, on these questions he simply confesses ignorance. For Brahman is in its own nature unknowable, and where human reason fails the revelation of the scriptures serves us as a surer guide and light. Here our philosophers agree entirely with the sage of Königsberg, in as much as the latter in his *Critique of Pure Reason* maintains that the knowledge of God, the world and the soul, as things-in-themselves, must always remain beyond the limits of metaphysic and lie within the region of faith.

19. Another convincing proof of the fact that the philosophy of Vedānta does not contradict the theistic world-view, is presented to us in Bādarāyana's Brahmasūtras II. 3, 43, where it deals with

the relation between God and the individual souls. According to Vedānta, the soul stands in the same relation to God as the supported to the supporter. Now the question is whether this relation is to be regarded as that between the servant and the Lord, or that between the spark and the fire. The author answers: The soul must be a part of God, as the spark is of fire. But since God has not parts, how can it be that the soul is not one with God? "Owing to the indication of difference" is the answer, i.e., because Chhándogya Upaniṣad 8. 7. 1., Bṛhadáranyaka Upaniṣad 4. 4. 22. and 3. 7. 22, show that there is a distinction between God and the soul. But would not this distinction be much better expressed by the comparison with the Lord and his servant? To this objection, the author of the Sūtras replies with the remark, that there are other designations which teach also a non-distinction between the two (e.g., Atharvaveda 10. 8. 27. Svet. Up. 4. 3. Taitt. Up. 3. 1-7., Brh. Up. 3. 7. 23).

That in which the soul and God are identical is spirituality (or rationality), just as that in which spark and fire are one is heat. Thus because both can be shown to be distinct and yet not distinct from each other, we must comprehend the soul as a part of "God." The Smṛti also teaches this, e.g., Bhagavad-Gītā 15. 7. Although the relation between the governor and the governed generally signifies one between the Lord and his servant, still in accordance with the scriptures, the relation must be determined as one between the whole and its part. That is to say, God, who is rich in unsurpassably excellent qualities (*Upādhis*), exercises a sovereignty over the soul, which is clothed in fewer *Upādhis*; so there is no contradiction but agreement.

20. I admit that Sankara's Vedāntism goes a step further than that of Bādarāyana, as it recognizes the distinction between God on the one hand and the world and soul on the other to be only empirically real, i.e., valid only from the phenomenal standpoint and also invents a theory of Māyā or cosmical illusion as a basis for this distinction. But a careful study of the various commentaries on the Vedānta Sūtras will convince one that the true and original view of Bādarāyana lies somewhere midway between Sankara's and 'Rámānuja's interpretations and represents therefore both the theistic and the pantheistic elements of the Upaniṣads (*vide* Thibaut's Introduction to the Vedānta Sūtras S. B. E.).

21. These quotations from the Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras, which constitute the highest authorities on matters pertaining to the Vedānta school of philosophy, remove the foundation of the Holzmann-Garbeish theory of interpolations in the Gītā based on a supposed contradiction between an absolute world-soul and a transcendent world-creator and world-ruler, and rather serve to establish the close relationship of the Gītā with the Upaniṣadic speculations.

If this combination of an impersonal world-soul with a personal embodiment of God in the Gītā is a contradiction, the cause of this contradiction is to be found in the religious history of India, in her characteristic mode of philosophical thinking and not in a re-handling of the text. Thus we find the union of these contradictory ideas repeatedly in every religious text-book of the Indian sects, be it about the incarnation Rama, or Krishna or Siva. And I believe, philosophically considered, every theory of Incarnation contains a contradiction, however purely theistic the religion may be, in which this theory is incorporated. That the infinite, omnipresent, unborn and undying God is born as man, lives and dies as man in a definite place and at a certain time, as the Christian theory of Incarnation holds, is not less contradictory in thought than the Vaiṣṇava or any other conception of the same.

22. Thus we see that the theistic conceptions are as clearly and as undoubtedly present in the Upaniṣads as the pantheistic. Hence I must raise a protest against the usual custom among the western writers in general to designate the Vedāntic view (i.e., the view of the Upaniṣads) as pantheistic without any qualification. The chief Indologists have indeed noticed the distinction between the philosophy of the Vedānta and the pantheistic philosophy of the West (as presented, e.g., by Spinoza) and thought it necessary to coin new terminology or to modify the word pantheism. Thus Weber speaks of the Vedānta as a system of monotheistic pantheism, or of Unitarian pantheism (*System des monotheistischen Pantheismus oder unitaren Pantheismus*), Deussen uses the word Idealism or monism (*Monistische Grundsätze des Yajnavalkya*) for the original (he should have said, the essential) philosophy of the Upaniṣad, and he is inclined to regard both the theistic and pantheistic ideas contained in them as later concessions made to Realism, a view which I hold to be untenable. Hopkins is also compelled to use a designation so self-contradictory as "personal Pantheism."

Even Garbe himself in his *Sāṅkhya Philosophie* (p. 107) calls the summit of the Upaniṣad teachings "Idealistic Monism." In my humble opinion the Vedāntic view cannot be adequately comprehended or described by any "ism" of the Western philosophy. The Indians themselves designate it as Advaitavād or nondualism, which includes in its connotation forms of interpretation so widely apart from one another as the systems of Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. I would like to retain the words pantheism and theism respectively for the immanent and transcendent notions found in the various parts of the Vedānta and use the word "Vedāntism" for the conception underlying the whole system.

## SECTION II. THE GÎTĀ AND THE THEORY OF INCARNATION

23. Now, I anticipate an objection from the standpoints of Holzmann and Garbe. How can you reconcile the Vedāntic conceptions of the Gîtā, so I hear them interrogate, with a Divine incarnation in human form, viz., Kṛṣṇa, who demands personal love and devotion to himself, and who even reveals his divine form to Arjuna as an act of special grace?

On this point I must dwell at some length.

The concept of Incarnation itself has its roots in the Vedic times, and develops under the influence of the atmosphere of the Upaniṣads, although it does not find an explicit expression in the older literature. In the conception of Incarnation as presented in the Gîtā, the genius of our poet has combined two different tendencies in the current of Vedāntic reflections into an ethico-religious synthesis. Let me make my position clear, by tracing the development of this idea from older times and showing how the Gîtā embodies this conception in Kṛṣṇa, mainly following the lines indicated by Dr. R. G. Bhāndārkar in his *Vaishnavism, Shaivism and other Religious Sects in India*.

24. Even so early as in the Rigveda (V. 3. 1-2) we meet with the identification of various gods with one another, e.g., Agni is the same god as Varuna, Mitra, Indra and Aryaman. What Max Müller designates Henotheism forms most probably the basis of this identification of the different gods. The idea of Incarnation rests primarily and directly on the view of the Upaniṣads, that the Param-Atman (or the supreme soul) manifests himself in a multiplicity of forms—which view, again, can be regarded, accord-



ing to Dr. R. G. Bhándárkar, as a development, and strangely in an opposite direction, of the identification of various gods. That is to say, if all these various gods are one, it is naturally conceivable that one God can transform himself into various forms and appear as so many gods. This notion, viz., that the same God assumed different forms, finds a faint expression in Rigveda VII. 55, which runs thus: "O Lord of the House (Vástospate), be our friend and cause our delight, by entering into various bodies as the destroyer of diseases." In Nirukta 10. 19 the idea becomes a little clearer, viz., "the gods assume any and every form whatever, if they like." This unity of the gods is however gradually extended till it transcends the theological limit and becomes a cosmic principle so that man is no longer content with the thought that all gods are the various forms of one and the same God, but seeks to derive all beings, nay, the whole phenomenal world, from a single ultimate and absolute principle. Hence follows the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, according to which beyond and above the multiplicity of things and souls, there exists a Brahman or Atman, of which this world of variety is a manifestation, as illustrated by such verses as Katha V. 9-12, IV. 11, Bṛhad Up. 4, 4, 19. "This is to be realized by the mind, there is nothing like plurality in the world; he passes from death to death, who perceives as though there were multiplicity here" (Katha Up. IV. 11—Bṛhad Up. 4. 4. 9).<sup>1</sup> "As there is one Fire which pervades the universe and assumes various forms, as there is one atmosphere that interpenetrates the world and assumes various forms, so there is one soul of all beings that dwells within and yet assumes various forms extended" (Katha Up. IV. 9-10).

Now it is just to this thought, viz., that all beings, all forces, all individual souls are only embodiments or expressions of an inner self, that the imaginative genius of the poet of the Gītā gives utterance in a poetico-mythological form, when he identifies Kṛṣṇa with God and symbolizes the whole universe as the body of God, e.g. Gītā VII. 7—11. "There is naught whatsoever higher than I, O Dhananjaya. All this is threaded on Me, as rows of pearls on a string. I the sapidity in waters, O son of Kunti, I the radiance in the moon and the sun; the Word of power in all the Vedas, sound in ether, and virility in men: The pure fragrance of earth and the brilliance in fire am I, the life in all beings am I, and the

<sup>1</sup> This seems to mean that Brahman is homogeneous and undifferentiated.

austerity in ascetics. Know Me, O Pārtha, as the eternal seed of all beings. I am the reason of the reason-endowed, the splendour of splendid things am I. And I the strength of the strong, devoid of desire and passion. In beings I am desire not contrary to duty, O Lord of the Bhāratas." Again in the Gītā IX. 4-6 Kṛṣṇa says, "By Me all this world is pervaded in My unmanifested aspect: all beings have root in Me, I am not rooted in them. Nor have beings root in Me: behold My sovereign Yoga, the support of beings, yet not rooted in beings, My Self their efficient cause. As the mighty air everywhere moving is rooted in the ether, so all beings rest rooted in Me, thus know thou."<sup>1</sup>

25. But there is still another current of thought, which has dictated the theory of Incarnation to our poet, viz., the suggestions received from the conception of the identity of soul with God. The method of expression according to which a teacher or seer identifies himself with the Supreme soul had long been known in India—indeed long before Kṛṣṇa lived and died on earth and long before the Gītā was composed. The sages and saints, who gave expression to the principle of the identity of God and the individual soul in such bold and yet noble sayings as "I am Brahma" (*aham Brahma asmi*), "thou art that" (*tat tvamasi*), "I am that" (*So'ham*), could naturally be expected to have the courage to impart their teachings in such a manner as if they were utterances of God to them or revelations of God himself. Even in R̥gveda IV. 26, 1, Indra says to Ṛṣi Bāmadeva, "I was once Manu, I was once Suryya, I am the learned wise Kakṣiban, I have adorned with ornaments the wise Kutsa, the son of Arjuna, I am the wise Usana, look at me. I have given the world to the Aryas. I have poured rain on the men performing sacrifices: I have brought the roaring waters, the gods carry out my wishes." Then in Kauṣītaki Up. III.—Pratardana, son of Divodas, once went to the dwelling place of Indra, through fighting and courage. In course of the story, Indra says, "Know me. I hold it to be the best for man that he knows me. I am the breath (*Prāṇa*). I am the knowing Self; Worship me as immortal life. He who knows me, by no works will his place in heaven be lowered." In Brahmasūtras I. 1, 28-31,<sup>2</sup> we find an explanation of this manner

<sup>1</sup> The relation between God and the world here is not organic, and cannot be accounted for except by the theory of Māyā.

<sup>2</sup> Vide Thibaut's Translation (S.B.E.).



of speaking. "The word *prāṇa* does not denote the highest Brahman because the speaker designates himself. The speaker, who is a certain powerful god called Indra, at first says in order to reveal himself to Pratardana, 'Know me only,' and later on, 'I am *prāṇa*, the intelligent Self.' How, it is asked, can the *prāṇa*, which this latter passage, expressive of personality as it is, represents as the Self of the speaker, be Brahman, to which as we know from Scripture, the attribute of being a speaker cannot be ascribed? Compare for instance Br̥hd, Upaniṣad III. 8. 8, 'It is without speech, without mind.' The conclusion is that, on account of the multitude of references to the interior Self, the chapter contains information regarding Brahman, not regarding the self of some deity. How, then, can the circumstance of the speaker (Indra) referring to himself be explained? The individual divine Self called Indra, perceiving by means of ṛṣi-like intuition (the existence of which is vouched for by Scripture) its own Self to be identical with the supreme Self, instructs Pratardana (about the highest Self) by means of the word, 'Know me only.'

"By intuition of the same kind the Ṛṣi Bāmadeva reached the knowledge expressed in the words, 'I was Manu and Surya.'

"The passages, 'I am Brahman,' 'That art thou,' and others, thus prove that there is in reality no such thing as an individual soul absolutely different from Brahman, but Brahman, in so far as it differentiates itself through the mind (buddhi) and other limiting conditions, is called individual soul, agent, enjoyer."

Although this identity of soul and God applies to every individual, yet the wise and the holy seers alone have a clear consciousness of this identity in their hearts. It is thus that the great personalities of history, the heroes, the prophets, the founders of religion and reformers have often felt as if they were vehicles of the Divine spirit and have often been worshipped as the Incarnations or manifestations of God in flesh and blood. It is in this sense that we have to understand the Gītā X. 41, where it says, "All that is mighty and good, beautiful and powerful, form a Vibhūti or manifestation of God." It is in this sense, too, that our poet regards Kṛṣṇa as God made flesh and makes him identify himself with Vyāsa among the Munis, Viṣṇu among the Ādityas and so on.

26. Thus we see that the idea of incarnation, as found in the Gītā, springs out of the Vedāntic soil through the combination of two older modes of thought, viz.: (1) that Brahman, as the

Principle of Unity, manifests itself in the multifarious forms of reality and (2) that all individual souls especially the nobler ones of human race are identical with God. Our poet has, however, given an ethical and religious turning to this concept: in so far as the realization of a moral world-order by a providential God underlies his theory of Incarnation. As the Gítá IV. 7 and 8 says, "Every time when righteousness is on the wane and unrighteousness prevails, I create myself. To save the righteous, to destroy the wicked and to establish virtue, I am born in every age."

27. Garbe himself, anticipating this criticism, has admitted that the Indians have never recognized a contradiction in this combination of theism and pantheism, as in many other places of the Mahábhárata, in the Puránas and in the system of Ramanuja, Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu is identified with the Universal Soul. But he betrays his ignorance and even misconception of the spirit of Indian thought in general, when he inconsistently maintains that this representation of Kṛṣṇa as the world-soul belongs to a later age of syncretistic tendencies much later than that of the original Bhagavad-Gítá. An examination of the grounds for his opinion will convince one of its untenability and one-sidedness:—

(a) First of all I should remark that it is indifferent, at what period an historical person becomes identified with Brahma. The fact that in any age whatever, earlier or later, a personal God can be represented by the people of a country as the impersonal world-soul, sufficiently shows the character of the people, and their peculiar religio-philosophical necessity for combining theism and pantheism. The very admission of the possibility of this strange combination sets aside the need of an assumption of re-handling in a text where such a mixture of theism and pantheism is found.

(b) Long before the composition of the Gítá, even during the age of the oldest Upaniṣad, the identification of a particular God with Brahma or all-god has been characteristic of Indian thought. In the Śvetáśvatara Upaniṣad such designations of a personal god as Hara, Rudra, which have later received sectarian significance and been conceived of in a realistic fashion, are presented in close connection with Brahma, without the slightest hint that they were distinct from each other. In fact, the Vedántic conception has in subsequent times become the philosophical foundation of all religious sects of India and so it is that throughout the whole

post-Vedic religious history of India, we hardly meet with any personal God who had not been identified with Brahma. Hopkins is substantially right, when he distinguished two stages in the development of the Mahábhárata according as Kṛṣṇa is regarded as demi-god in the one stage and as all-god in the next. Garbe is hardly justified in adding an intermediate and third period of transition from half-god to all-god. For there is no essential distinction for the Indian thinkers between God and Brahma (all-god), so that when an individual, in virtue of his spiritual power, heroic deeds or lofty moral teachings, is elevated to the rank of god or comes to be recognized as a Divine incarnation, he is as a matter of fact regarded as Brahma at the same time.

(c) Those verses in the Gítá (e.g., VII. 19, XII. 1-5) in which a distinction is drawn between Kṛṣṇa and Brahma, or between a personal God and impersonal all-god do not indicate, as Garbe supposes, that the positing on the same level (*Gleichsetzung*) of Kṛṣṇa with Brahma, was at the time of the interpolation only just in the becoming, but rather give expression to a truth that holds good for all ages, viz., that it is easier and quicker to attain holiness through the worship of a personal god than through that of an imperishable and unknown Brahma, and that the number of those who adhere to the former is therefore larger than that of those who practise the latter.

In the Gítá XIV. 26, 27 and other places (e.g. XVIII. 50-54) where the author speaks of "entering into Brahman" or "becoming Brahma," the difficulty can be easily removed, when we interpret the verses thus; the individual souls who live a holy and noble life belong to a special class of liberated beings, known as "Brahmabhuta," i.e., essentially one with Brahma, but do not become identical in existence with Brahma, as such, which is *sui generis*. There remains thus a distinction between the liberated souls and Brahma, as the followers of the Vedánta school hold. In the light of this interpretation, we can easily understand Gítá XVIII. 54, 55 where Kṛṣṇa says that the individual who becomes *Brahmabhuta*, i.e., "one with Brahma", feels the deepest love towards God and enters into Him.

28. Not a single verse therefore makes it necessary for us to assume that the juxtaposition of Kṛṣṇa and Brahma is the proof of a later Vedántisation of Kṛṣṇaistic Gítá. On the contrary we have reasons to believe that the Gítá was originally a Vedántic

treatise of the Upaniṣadic soil and must have been re-handled by the Kṛṣṇaite writers at a later stage when it was incorporated in the Epic Mahābhārata. It is true that a distinction has long been drawn in Indian speculations between the *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa* Brahma, between *Sopādhika* and *Nirupādhika* Brahma, and even between impersonal Brahma and personal Iswara; but these have generally been regarded as different aspects of the same being, and not as two separate entities. As we have already said, a distinction in thought does not involve necessarily a separation in existence.

29. We must also remember that the word "Brahma" has been used in the Gītā in widely different meanings. It signifies not only the Vedas (e.g. G. III. 15, VI. 44), but also Prakṛti or Prime Matter (as in G. XIV. 3, 4,—where it is always conjoined with Mahat or Great). In G. V. 10, 21, VI. 28, it seems to be used even in the sense of "personal God." Conversely, in G. XIII. 28, 27, we have the words *Iśwara* and *Parameśwara* used in the sense of Vedāntic Brahma or Sāṅkhya Puruṣa, while in G. VIII. 3 dealing with some technical philosophical expressions, the meaning of Brahma is expressly stated to be the supreme Indestructible (*Paramam Akṣaram*).

30. According to Garbe, Kṛṣṇa appears in the Gītā almost throughout as a person and his identification with Brahma is only in a few places expressed in distinct words. But how could it be otherwise? The very plan of the poem makes Kṛṣṇa the speaker and his friend Arjuna the listener, and even a divine person must communicate his teachings in human ways and in a human language; for, as the Vedānta Sūtras I. 1. 29 (according to Sankara's commentary) ironically puts it, "No speech can be ascribed to Brahma, who is as such always unmanifest." When Yājñavalkya said "I am Brahma," and Svetaketu's father said "Thou art that," they remained withal human throughout. As we have said, it is only a gratuitous assumption on the part of Garbe which led him to distinguish between two stages, viz., the earlier one of Kṛṣṇa's identification with God and the later one of his identification with Brahma, while for the Indian mind, these two modes of expressions are really one and the same.



## GARBE'S THEORY EXAMINED

### SECTION III. THE GÍTÁ AND THE DEIFICATION OF KṚṢṆA

31. Now I must go a step further and maintain that Garbe is entirely mistaken in holding that the author of the Gítá had for his aim the deification of a particular Hero or the introduction of the worship of the founder of a religion, namely Kṛṣṇa. The whole poem is saturated with a liberal, tolerant and unsectarian spirit, so that all religious sects can accept its teachings without exception. Those scholars who find in the Gítá only the religious text-book of a particular sect, have in fact blindly ignored the differences behind the apparent similarities or taken an one-sided view of the case, and thereby done violence to the substance of the teachings of the Gítá as well as to the chronology of the development of Indian religion and philosophy during the Upaniṣadic and Vaiṣṇava periods.

32. We know, of course, that the Gítá has for a long time been used as the principal text of the Bhágavatas or Vaiṣṇavas. We find no doubt that the designations applied to God in the Gítá are mostly such as are familiar in the literature of this sect, e.g. Kṛṣṇa, Bhagaván, Puruṣottama, Vāsudeva, Várṣṇeya, Yádava, Mádhava, Keśava, Govinda, Hṛṣikeśa, Janárdana, Madhusúdana, Keśinisúdana. Then again, throughout the whole text, we come across such personal demands of Kṛṣṇa as the following : " Turn your mind towards me, worship me, offer sacrifices to me, revere me, thus devoting yourself to me and valuing me above everything else, will you enter into me ", and so on. Finally, Kṛṣṇa speaks of his numerous births and his self-creation in every age and even reveals to Arjuna his divine form. These are evidences enough for holding the view that the Gítá was composed as a holy scripture of the Kṛṣṇaite sects and that the Kṛṣṇa of the Gítá is the same Avatára (Incarnation) of Viṣṇu whose life-history has been immortalized in the Harivaṁśa, Viṣṇupurāṇa and Bhágavata Purāṇa. However, a scientific investigation of the contents of the Gítá and of its relation to other Kṛṣṇaite scriptures will at least show us that the thing can be explained equally well in other ways, and that far beneath the superficial similarities, there are very important points of contrast between the teachings of the Gítá and of the works of Vaiṣṇava authors, which compel us to modify to a large extent the traditional view of the matter.

33. First as to the designations of Kṛṣṇa. Accepting as we do the view that the Gítá was originally an independent Upaniṣad, which was later on inserted in the body of the epic Mahábhārata,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vide Parts II and III.

we may well imagine that the interpolator was himself a great Vaiṣṇava devotee who utilized that sublime Divine Song for his own sectarian end of glorifying Kṛṣṇa and introduced necessary changes in the text to fit it in with the epic story and adapt it to the Bhāgavata conception of Kṛṣṇa. We shall see in a subsequent chapter that a good deal may be said in favour of this supposition, although we cannot conclusively establish this as a historical fact. But without going to such an extreme standpoint at this stage, we may offer a more satisfactory, because less objectionable, explanation for the appearance of a Kṛṣṇaite character in the Gītā, viz., that our author has founded the theme of his poem on the story of the Mahābhārata and was bound to retain and employ the usual nomenclature of the great Epic. Especially, such names as Bhagavān, Puruṣottama and Vāsudeva were in his days, as they are even to the present-day Hindus, pure and simple names of God acceptable to all and bearing no sectarian air about them. And this is just in accord with the grammatical derivation of these words, as is clearly expressed in the Mahābhārata and older scriptures more than once. For instance, the word Bhagavān in the sense of happy or lucky is found in Rgveda I, 164, 40; 7, 41, 4, etc., and in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa I, 8, etc. In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad II. 4, 13, Chhāndogya Upaniṣad IV. 2, 2, and other places, a teacher or respectable personage is addressed as Bhagavān, i.e., "revered Sir," and even Buddha was called Bhagavān by his followers. In Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad III, 11 and V. 4 the word is used expressly as a designation of God. The word 'Puruṣottama' (the best of men) has been explained by Kṛṣṇa himself in a spiritual significance (G. XV. 17-18). The word "Vāsudeva" is explained differently in different places of the Mahābhārata, e.g., *Vāsu*—the dwelling place of all beings, *Deva*—bright, dazzling; *Vāsu-deva*—the bright God, who is the resort of all beings, or *Vāsudeva*—the God who is above all and in whom everything lives (P.W.) (*vide* Mahābhārata 12, 12904: 5, 2562). That the word is not a patronymic and did not originally mean a family name of Kṛṣṇa (i.e. son of Vasudeva), but signified his own name (pronom.) is established by R. G. Bhāndārkar (Grundriss, I. A. R. "Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism and Other Sects.")

34. As regards such names as Janārdana, Madhusūdan, Keśinisthana (the destroyer of the demons, Jana, Madhu, and Keśi) our text does not mention even a single historical event and we shall seek in



vain for the slightest trace of a miracle or heroic achievement on the part of Kṛṣṇa in our text, apart from the revelation of the Universal divine form. Were the poet a Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava, he would have certainly suggested in course of the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna one or two historical facts about the wonderful life of Kṛṣṇa, as related in the other Vaiṣṇava scriptures like Viṣṇupurāṇa, Harivaṁśa and Bhāgavatpurāṇa. As Hopkins says, "It is noticeable that though Kṛṣṇa (Viṣṇu) is the ostensible speaker, there is scarcely anything to indicate that the poem was originally composed even for Viṣṇu." (*Religions of India*, p. 399.)

One might go to the extent of inferring from this absence of the epic or purāṇic character in the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā that the poem was originally quasi-Vedāntic and was later on made into a Vaiṣṇava text by the introduction of Kṛṣṇa. This omission or silence of our poet with regard to every historical and personal event seems to me not to be accidental, but intentional. His interest lay in presenting the fundamental truths of ethics and religion, not in deifying a person, even though this person may in those times have already been worshipped as God in some quarters. Perhaps in giving utterance to his own thoughts through a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, he was impelled mainly by the artistic sense of poetic beauty and also by the ulterior motive of influencing the mind of the masses more successfully. This peculiar mode of imparting ethical and religious instructions is a characteristic of the Indian mind. Even the Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads used to teach their doctrines through a dialogue between Indra and Prataṛdana (Kauṣītaki Up. III.) or between Yama and Nachiketā (Katha Up.). From this standpoint, one might say that the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā has as little connection with the Kṛṣṇa of history or of the Bhāgavata sect as Shakespeare's dramatic representation of the character of Hamlet to that of the historical person of the same name, who was a Prince of Denmark.

35. Again when Kṛṣṇa identifies himself with God, and uses such modes of expression as "I am the creator, preserver and destroyer of the world; worship me," "Men follow my ways everywhere," etc., it does not afford us any justification whatsoever for holding that the poet intended to raise the human Kṛṣṇa into an object of worship or make an incarnation of him. For the seers of the Upaniṣads often identified themselves with God and ascribed the origin of their teaching to God Himself. It is just this notion of the identity of soul and God, the idea, viz., that the best, the most

beautiful and the truest in the human soul is a direct revelation of God Himself, that gave our author the boldness, the power and the certainty which enabled him to offer us his own views (and really the teachings of the Gītā are at bottom the views of the poet himself) in such a way as if the Lord of the universe or the unknowable Brahma had unreservedly communicated to him all the holy wisdom, and all the mysteries about the destiny of man, and the origin and the end of the Universe. Those verses which seem to inculcate the doctrines of love and devotion to Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā signify nothing else but love and devotion to the Supreme soul who dwells in the heart of all beings. This idea is expressed quite distinctly in the following verses of the Gītā, (1) IV. 35 : "The knowledge in virtue of which you will see all beings in yourself, therefore in me." (2) VI. 29, 30 : "He sees his own self in all things and all things in himself"; "who sees me in everything and everything in me." (3) XVI. 18 : "They hate me in their own bodies and in the bodies of other beings." (4) XVII. 6 : "These fools torment the group of elements combined in the body and also myself, who reside in their bodies." These verses indicate unmistakably that Kṛṣṇa does not speak at all of his own person but only of God in himself, who *also* dwells in all beings even when he uses such pronouns of the first person as "I," "my," "me," etc. Only two verses seem to claim distinctly and expressly a personal recognition of Kṛṣṇa himself, but they are so incompatible with the spirit of the whole poem that I am inclined to regard them as later additions. These verses are G. IX. 11, 12. Similarly and on the same grounds I would doubt the originality of the verses XI. 41, 42.

36. Further, there are verses in the Gītā, where Kṛṣṇa speaks of God in the third person, i.e., as a being distinct from himself, e.g., V. 14, 15, VIII. 8, 22, XIII. 27, 28, 29 (though in the last three verses the terms Iswara, Parameswara, etc., are used to denote the individual self as well, and strangely as the substitute for the Sāṅkhya Puruṣa), XV. 4, and XVIII. 61. If the distinction between Kṛṣṇa and Brahma in the Gītā shows, according to Garbe, that the identification of the former with the latter was still in the becoming, then the verses just mentioned ought to be taken as the proof of an assumption that even the deification of Kṛṣṇa or the recognition of Kṛṣṇa as a God, was at that time only in the becoming—an assumption which would take away the ground from beneath the whole theory of Garbe's.

## GARBE'S THEORY EXAMINED

37. Even the manifestation by Kṛṣṇa of the divine form embracing the whole Universe as described in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā (if this chapter is not an interpolation) must be interpreted only in a symbolical and metaphorical sense, i.e., in the sense that the worshipper of God attains by His Grace a divine insight, through which he is enabled to see the whole universe as the body of God with all men as living, moving, and having their being in God, and to realize God as ever-present and ever-active in the natural and mental phenomena and in all the events of history and relations of society. Those who accept this revelation of the Divine Form in a literal and superficial sense, fail to appreciate the beauty and the depth of meaning in this chapter and characterize it as the *most vulgar and monstrous representation* that a poet could ever offer.

### SECTION IV. THE GĪTĀ AND VAIṢṆAVISM

38. I shall now try to show that the Vaiṣṇava form of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu was a later development and was not known to the author of the Gītā. After the Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata, or of history, had become elevated to the rank of God, his followers naturally began to search for evidences of his divinity in order to justify their faith in his being an incarnation, and as the Gītā fulfilled that purpose better than any other work, they inserted the text in the Mahābhārata (probably with the additions of such verses as IX. 11, 12) and began to explain its teachings in a sectarian sense. Many other interpolations were later on taken into the body of the Mahābhārata to realize the same object, viz., to demonstrate the divinity of a particular hero or sectarian god, like Mahadeva, Rama or Kṛṣṇa. Some of the interpolated texts sought to imitate the doctrines and the design of the Gītā with little success. For example, the Anugītā (Mahābhārata XIV. 164), which, according to Telang, was composed many centuries later than the Gītā, contains a mixture of all sorts of philosophical discussions under the form of a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, initiated in response to a request made by the latter to the former, the same teaching which Kṛṣṇa imparted to Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra.<sup>1</sup> As it was naturally to be expected, the author of the Anugītā has, however,

<sup>1</sup> Here is a proof of the influence of Kṛṣṇa and of the authority of the Gītā. Every teacher used to associate his doctrines with the names of Kṛṣṇa and the Gītā, however different they may have been from the views of the latter.

betrayed his own weakness and inferiority to the great Poet of the Gītā in that Kṛṣṇa is said in the very beginning of the poem to scold Arjuna for the latter's bad memory and also to confess that the wisdom contained in the Gītā had been taught by him in a state of deep *Yoga* (concentration), but was now forgotten by himself. The divine form, which Kṛṣṇa reveals to the sage Utaṅka<sup>1</sup> in this book in order to save himself from the curse of the latter, is called Vaiṣṇavarupa, not Visvarupa or Virātrupa as in the Bhagavad-Gītā.<sup>2</sup> These additions in the Mahābhārata prove that even at so late a date as the time of the composition of the Anugītā Kṛṣṇa was still a half-god—a fact which refutes Garbe's theory that the Gītā in its original pre-Vedāntic form belonged to a period in which Kṛṣṇa had already been elevated from a half-god to God and identified with Viṣṇu.

39. But when we compare the teachings of the Gītā with those of the other Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇuite writings, the sharp contrast between them throws additional light on the matter. In the twelfth book of the Mahābhārata the chapter entitled *Mokṣadharmā* gives us a legend, according to which the sage Nārada received a new monotheistic religion from Nārāyaṇa, or the highest God, in the island called Śvetadwīpa. This religion of the Ekāntin or Pañcharātras is said to be the same as was taught in the Bhagavad-Gītā (XII. 349). Beside many similarities of thought, like the love and devotion to God, combination of theism and pantheism, this religion contains many doctrines essentially distinct from those of the Gītā. The highest God Nārāyaṇa is said to be born in four forms, Nara, Nārāyaṇa, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. We then read of four *Murtis* of Nārāyaṇa, (1) Vāsudeva, (2) Saṅkarṣaṇa, (3) Pradyumna, (4) Aniruddha, which are respectively identical with the highest Atman, the individual soul (Jīvātman), the intellect (Buddhi), and the principle of egoism (Ahaṁkāra). Mention is made of six (and afterwards ten) Avatāras or incarnations in various ages or *Yugas*. Here we find the beginning of the confusion of the teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā with the popular religion of the Bhāgavatas or Sāttvatas. In the Gītā also we have the conception of Incarnation, but there is neither the use of the word "Avatāra" nor any mention of the

<sup>1</sup> Utaṅka's prayer, which follows, addressed Kṛṣṇa as Brahma.

<sup>2</sup> There is still another imitation of the revelation of Visvarupa in Mahābhārata V. 129, and that takes place strangely in the Court of Duryyodhana. This may be regarded as another proof of interpolation in the Great Epic.



number and names of those incarnations. In the *Gītā* also, the inner sense (*manas*), the understanding (*buddhi*) and the principle of egoism (*ahamkāra*) as well as the individual soul (*Jiva*) form parts of the divine nature, but there is not the slightest trace in it of their association with members of the *Vṛṣṇi* or *Sāttvata* family, viz., *Vāsudeva*, *Sankarṣaṇa*, *Pradyumna*, and *Aniruddha*. Dr. R. G. Bhándárkar, after comparing the *Gītā* with the *Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Śāntiparva*, comes to the conclusion that at the time of the *Gītā* the *Vaiṣṇava* doctrine of four *Vyūhas* had not yet been formulated. But I would go even further and assert that the original *Gītā* belongs to a period when the sect of *Vaiṣṇavism*, known as the *Bhāgavata School*, had not sprung into existence at all. [N.B.—*Nara*, *Nārāyaṇa*, *Sāttvata*, also do not occur in the *Gītā*.]

40. We have already seen that the idea of incarnation in the *Gītā* is quite a natural development of the thoughts of the *Vedānta* and can be fully explained from an idealistic standpoint. But in *Vaiṣṇava* and other sectarian literature, the conception takes a perfectly realistic and almost mythical form. Thus in the *Mokṣadharma* and the *Harivaṁśa*, we learn of the descent of *Nārāyaṇa* or *Viṣṇu* in the shape of a boar, a swan, a tortoise, a fish, a dwarf and so on. It is remarkably strange that even the tenth book of the *Gītā*, where a large number of divine forms is mentioned, does not speak of any of these *avatāras*, although the *Purāṇic* or mythological names of *Skanda* as Commander-in-Chief, of *Uchchaiṣravā* the best of horses, *Airāvata* the noblest elephant, and *Prahlāda* the pious among the demons, are referred to. In the *Viṣṇupurāṇa* the deistic-realistic view of incarnation is carried further in details, so that one reads of the God *Viṣṇu* sleeping with his wife *Lakṣmi* on the snake in the milky ocean and yet descending on earth with a part of his divine energy. For example, *Viṣṇupurāṇa* (IV. 2, 8-10), tells us: "In ancient times in the age of *Treta*, a great battle took place between the gods and the demons in which the gods were defeated. Then they worshipped the Lord *Viṣṇu* who, on being praised by them, said, 'I shall slay these demons by partly incorporating myself (*aṁśena svayam eva avatīrya*) in the person of *Puraṇjaya*, the best among the warriors. In the battle, the *Puraṇjaya*, inspired by the divine energy, destroyed the demons." Again, in V. 1, 59, "God the Lord, being adored in this manner, took two hairs, one white and the other black, and spoke to the gods, 'These two hairs of mine will descend on earth (*dharātale avatīrya*) in flesh and blood and



take away the burden of miseries in the world.'” Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma are spoken of as these two hairs of Viṣṇu.

In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa also the same thought is repeated. To quote for instance a few passages :— II. 7, 26 : “ To remove the sufferings of the earth oppressed by the army of demons, two divine parts, white and black hairs, have been born ” : X, 2, 16-18 : “ God, the soul of the world, partly entered into the soul of Vasudeva. The part of this world-good was then laid by Vasudeva in the womb of Devaki. The divine woman received through spirit this part which was her own self, because he is the soul of all beings.”

41. Setting aside for the present the question as to whether these representations of the Purāṇas are products of pure fancy, or if some real historical facts may be concealed behind them, we may here observe that this deistic Realism is widely different from the monotheistic pantheism of the Gītā. Indeed these later Vaiṣṇava scriptures, in spite of their Vedāntic admixture here and there, were still predominantly theistic ; and their view of incarnation is so surprisingly similar to the Christian conception that some scholars have suspected a Christian influence here. Weber in his “ Indische Studien ” 1423 gives utterance to the supposition that the whole essence of Indian sectarianism owes its origin to the influence of Christianity in so far as it is grounded on the exclusive worship of a single God conceived of as personal ; and he adds in a note under II. 165 :— “ In my view, the whole Avatāra System, too, originated from an imitation of the Christian dogma of the descent of God on earth ” (cf. II. 399 and 400, where he replies to the objections of Lassen). I cannot accept this opinion of Weber’s because the Indian notion of God’s taking human form out of pity for the suffering humanity and out of anger towards the sinners can be explained as a combination of the various elements of the Vedic and the popular religions of India, viz. :— (1) The idea of divine grace and help coming down to the pious priests and singers as well as to devoted householders, and that of God’s inflicting vindictive punishment to their enemies, Asuras or demons, etc., ideas which frequently meet us in the Vedic hymns. (2) The almightiness (omnipotence) of God, in virtue of which He can assume various forms and go through various births. (3) The deification of the heroes and the founders of religion whose followers, after these heroes had once been raised to the rank of godhood, had recourse to the method of representing the fact in the reverse order, viz., that God had descended on earth in those forms

according to a preconceived plan. (4) The liberal religious spirit of toleration and also perhaps, (5) faith in the transmigration of the soul, in consequence of which the various incarnations were regarded as the embodiments of the same God, and a complete system with a definite number and order of such incarnations was built up. But I admit, nevertheless, that this Vaiṣṇava concept of *Avatāra* belongs to a much later period than that of the *Gītā*, and it may be that later forms of Vaiṣṇavism, (esp. the worship of Gopāla Kṛṣṇa and of his mother Devaki, together with the whole story of Kṛṣṇa's living among cowherds and cowherdesses) represent the influence of Christian legends on the growth of Hinduism.<sup>1</sup> Of course this concession is not to be extended to the ridiculous view of some Western scholars that the element of Bhakti in Vaiṣṇava and other forms of Indian religion is of Christian origin. As to the genesis of Bhakti in the Indian soil, I would refer the readers to the admirable scholarly contributions of Dr. R. G. Bhándárkar, Max Müller, Thibaut, and even of Garbe himself.

42. A chronological consideration of the history of the development of Kṛṣṇaism as presented by Dr. R. G. Bhándárkar also confirms our position (*vide* "Vaiṣṇavism, Shaivism and other Sects"). The Pali Buddhistic Text Niddesa, in which the various religious systems and superstitions of the 4th century B.C. are enumerated, mentions among other things the worship of Vāsudeva and Baladeva immediately beside each other. An inscription of 200 B.C. in Besnagar tells us of a tower with Garuḍa at the top which was erected in honour of Vāsudeva, the God of the Gods. In an inscription found in the large caves of Nanaghat (supposed to belong to the first century B.C.) the names of Vāsudeva and Saṅkarṣaṇa stand in Dvanda compound. An inscription found in Ghossendi near Rajputana mentions a temple of Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. In Pāṇini IV. 3. 98 the word Vāsudeva signifies according to Patañjali "Worshipful," not a Kṣattriya as in IV. 3. 99, although under Pāṇini IV. 1. 114 Vāsudeva and Valadeva are derived from Vṛṣṇi names. Patañjali not only mentions Rama and Keśava (i.e., Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa) but also "Janārdana with himself as the fourth," which probably indicated the four *Vyuhas* or Murtis (forms) of Nārāyaṇa mentioned in Mokṣadharmā. These facts

<sup>1</sup> Dr. B. N. Seal in his *Vaiṣṇavism and Christianity* suspects the influence of Christian Theology in the legends of Svetadvīpa, as described in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata.

show that (1) already at so early a period as 400–200 B.C. the name of Balarāma, Baladeva or Saṅkarṣaṇa used to be placed beside that of Vāsudeva and (2) that they were worshipped as God, (3) that Vāsudeva was identified with Nārāyaṇa as in the Mokṣadharma and (4) that members of the Vṛṣṇi family were commemorated as four forms of God. Yet in the Gītā, which according to Garbe was composed in the first half of the second century B.C., neither Balarāma nor Nārāyaṇa is mentioned even once. It is rather strange that Garbe, while devoting a long section to the origin and growth of Bhāgavatism in his "Introduction to the Gītā" (German translation) has not even once mentioned the doctrine of *Vyūhas* and has altogether ignored the significance of the absence of this concept for ascertaining the age of the Gītā.

I regard this circumstance (viz., the omission in the Gītā of four *Vyūhas* and of the names of three prominent Sāttvata associates of Vāsudeva, which are universally recognised by the Bhāgavata School) as a proof of the fact that at the time of the origin of our poem the worship of Vāsudeva and Balarāma was still unknown and that Kṛṣṇa was respected as a hero and a religious teacher only. In other words, the Gītā must be regarded as pre-Pāṇinian.

43. In Dr. Bhāndārkar's opinion the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu or the recognition of the former as an incarnation of the latter had not yet taken place at the time when the Gītā was written. This view seems to be confirmed by the fact that while in the Anugītā Kṛṣṇa's revelation of the Divine form before Utaṅka is called *Vaiṣṇava rūpa* the same is shown in the Bhagavad-Gītā as *Virāt-rūpa* or Visvarūpa. Again in the Gītā Kṛṣṇa speaks of himself as Viṣṇu among the Ādityas (X. 21), as distinguished from Viṣṇu the Supreme Lord, and even Arjuna's addressing him as Viṣṇu in G. XI. 24 and 30, signifies and refers only to his dazzling brightness. According to Bhāndārkar, in the evolution of Vaiṣṇavism "three streams of religious thought, the one from Viṣṇu, the Vedic God, as its source, another from Nārāyaṇa, the cosmic and philosophic God, and a third from Vāsudeva, the historical God, mingled decisively (a fourth stream from Gopāla Kṛṣṇa being more modern). It follows therefore that either Vaiṣṇavism is of later origin than the Gītā, or the latter has no essential relation to those streams of thought. Winternitz in his *Geschichte der Indischen Literatur* (pp. 390–91) says: "Kṛṣṇa was certainly in old heroic poems (epics) only a prominent leader of the peasant folks (cowherds) and had

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nothing divine in him. Even the Kṛṣṇa legends of the Harivaṁśa seem to have at their foundation older tales, in which Kṛṣṇa was not yet a God but the hero of a rural folk. It is possible that the ancient legends knew several Kṛṣṇas which were afterwards combined into one."

44. I agree entirely with Winternitz, and hold that the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā is only a symbolical figure whose original was supplied by the historical Kṛṣṇa (i.e., the hero and the religious teacher of the old epic, Mahābhārata), and that Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva of the Bhāgavatas and Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu of the Vaiṣṇavas were associated with the teachings of the Gītā only at a later age.

We conclude that the assumption of the sectarian or Viṣṇuite origin of the Bhagavad-Gītā—which lies at the root of the theory of interpolation in the Gītā, as formulated by Holzmänn, Hopkins, and Garbe—rests on a wholly erroneous foundation.

### CHAPTER III

## GARBE'S THEORY EXAMINED FURTHER

### SECTION I. THE GĪTĀ AND THE SĀṆKHYA-YOGA SYSTEMS

45. Another difficulty in Garbe's representation of the GĪtā requires a critical examination. With a view to supporting his theory of interpolation, he assumes an extraordinary and really curious mixture in the GĪtā of the theistic religion of the Bhāgavatas with the atheistic philosophy of the Sāṅkhyaite. "It has been long known," says Garbe, "that the teachings of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga are largely and wholly the foundations of the philosophical thoughts of the Bhagavad-GĪtā and that beside them the Vedānta is considerably kept in the background. How often are Sāṅkhya and Yoga mentioned with names, while Vedānta appears only once (XV. 15), and that also in the sense of the Upaniṣad. Thus even if we consider the part played by the philosophical systems in the traditional GĪtā and if we keep before our eyes the incompatible contradiction between the Sāṅkhya-Yoga and the Vedānta—which can be removed only through a distinction between the old and the new—the Vedāntic elements of the Bhagavad-GĪtā are found to be not original."

46. In this view of Garbe's one can notice a number of wrong interpretations of our text and also an incorrect reading of the history of Indian Philosophy.

(i) The GĪtā has been from the ancient times recognized as one of the principal text-books of Vedānta philosophy, and Bādarāyana's Brahmasūtras refer constantly to the verses of the GĪtā under the Smṛti (tradition) as to those of the Upaniṣads under Śruti (revelations). We have already seen that as regards the combination of Theism with Pantheism, the GĪtā belongs essentially to the thought-circle of the Upaniṣads. According to a traditional poem eulogistic of the GĪtā, the Upaniṣads are said to be the cows, Kṛṣṇa the milkman, Arjuna the calf, the wise the drinkers, and the nectar of the GĪtā the milk. An impartial and unprejudiced study of the poem will confirm, instead of discarding, this traditional view.



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47. (ii) Garbe had to leave out 134 verses of the *Gîtá* in order to eliminate the Vedánta elements from it altogether. But we can get rid of the Sánkhyā elements of the poem by taking away 45 verses only.

Hence taking into account the character of the poem as well as the numbers of verses associated with the several systems of philosophy, we can equally well and perhaps more plausibly regard the Vedántic verses as the original and the Sánkhyāite portions as interpolations.

48. (iii) That the *Gîtá* has not mentioned the name of the system of Vedánta rather proves its old age, for the Sûtras of the Vedánta may have been still unknown at the time of the composition of the *Gîtá*. Nevertheless the whole poem breathes the spirit of Vedánta. Many verses for example have been quoted word for word from the Upaniṣads. Not only is God designated as the creator of Vedánta, but even teachings which apparently resemble those of the Sánkhyā (i.e., the conceptions of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*) are said to be the words of *Brahmasûtras* (*Gîtá* XIII. 5). Of course it is an open question whether the *Gîtá* refers to the *Brahmasûtras* of Bâdarâyana or the Upaniṣads generally or an earlier treatise on the Vedánta system. But there could be no two opinions as to the fact that there are in our text several quotations from the verses of the Upaniṣads and a larger element of the Vedánta than of the Sánkhyā philosophy.

49. (iv) When, however, we carefully examine the places where the words Sánkhyā and Yoga are expressly mentioned, it becomes evident that the author could not have meant by these terms the prevalent systems of philosophy bearing these names. For instance, *Gîtá* II. 39 refers to certain verses preceding it as having been taught by *Sánkhyā*, although the contents of these verses have nothing to do with the doctrines of the Sánkhyā. In the *Gîtá* III. 3 "Sánkhyā" is expressly identified with knowledge and Yoga with action. *Gîtá* V. 4, 5, apparently suggest the unity and the similarity of Sánkhyā and Yoga, but these terms here really connote "renunciation of work" and "devotion to the path of action," respectively. It is interesting to observe that during the age of the *Gîtá* the controversy between the Sánkhyā and the Yoga was not about the existence or non-existence of God, but about the superiority of the path of knowledge or that of action—(knowledge involving renunciation of works)—as will be apparent from the contrast that is made between *Sannyāsa* (renunciation) and Yoga (acting in the

spirit of Devotion) with reference to Karma in the verses V. 1-2, 3, 6. In G. XIII. 25, Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Karma-Yoga are used in the sense of paths of knowledge and devotion to work respectively. Still more convincing is G. XVIII. 13, where we are told that the doctrine of Sāṅkhya teaches five causes of the success of actions. In fact, however, no texts belonging to the Sāṅkhya system mention these causes. Deussen and Schröder are right in translating the word Sāṅkhya as "berechnende Überlegung" (calculating consideration) and "Weisheit der Reflexion" (wisdom of contemplation). Some Indian commentators even explain the word *Sāṅkhya* in the Gītā in the sense of the Vedānta. Śaṅkarānandī interprets it as "*samyak khyāyate anena iti*," or that through which the nature of the essence of the soul and of the non-mental (matter) becomes distinctly determined or enlightened is Sāṅkhya, i.e., Vedānta. In any case, the terms Sāṅkhya and Yoga in the Gītā referred respectively to the traditional modes of spiritual discipline, viz., the path of knowledge and the path of action and not to the well-defined philosophical systems.

50. (v) If we consider the original meaning of the word *Sāṅkhya* and the genesis of the Sāṅkhya teachings, we arrive at the same conclusion, viz., that the Gītā understands by the word Sāṅkhya something quite different from the renowned system of the same designation. Already in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad (VI. 13) God is said to be "Sāṅkhya-Yogādhipamya," i.e., "attainable through Sāṅkhya and Yoga" and the Sāṅkhya and Yoga elements are mentioned by names, e.g., Prakṛti, Pradhāna, Bhogya and Bhoktā, three *guṇas*, the soul's independence of matter, etc. Still the whole Upaniṣad is so predominantly theistic in its religious content and so completely pantheistic and Vedāntic in its philosophical tendency that one is inclined to suspect that the concepts present in this text are only Sāṅkhyaite in appearance but in reality they belong to the philosophy of the Upaniṣad. As Max Müller says, "No doubt there are expressions in this Upaniṣad which remind us of technical terms used at a later time in the Sāṅkhya system, but of Sāṅkhya doctrines which I had myself formerly suspected in this Upaniṣad I can on close study find very little. Mr. Gough is perfectly right when he says that the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad propounds in Sāṅkhya terms the very principles that Sāṅkhya philosophers make it their business to subvert." One might doubt as to the propriety of calling certain terms "Sāṅkhya terms" in a work written at a time when a

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Sāṅkhya philosophy, such as we know it as a system, had as yet no existence and when the very name Sāṅkhya meant something quite different from the system of Kapila. I have already noticed the close relationship between the Gītā and the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad and this remark of Max Müller applies therefore wholly to the Gītā as well.

51. (vi) But when we read the other philosophical texts of the Mahābhārata, which are considerably later in origin than the Gītā, it becomes unmistakably clear that Max Müller's last supposition is entirely in agreement with facts. In Mokṣadharmā 218, Pāñchāśikhā, the spiritual son (or pupil) of Āsuri and Kapila, is said to communicate the Sāṅkhya doctrines to King Janadeva of Mithila as an incarnation of Kapila himself (the founder of the Sāṅkhya school). Here we read of the comprehension of the indestructible Brahma by Āsuri (14). In chapter 219, a follower of Kapila sees the highest Brahma that is unspotted like ether, in the faculty of Buddhi (Intellect). In chapter 301, the Tattvas and Guṇas of Sāṅkhya are enumerated in their proper order and the Sattva is said to be dependent on Ātman, Ātman on Nārāyaṇa, Nārāyaṇa on Mokṣa (23) and even the distinction between Jivātmā and Paramātmā is mentioned (77-78). Through knowledge one can see the world enveloped by the *māyā* of Kṛṣṇa. The world is said to be an ocean and the knowledge of Vedānta a saving island. The followers of Sāṅkhya attain the Sattva by the Rajas, the Lord Nārāyaṇa through the Sattva and the Supreme Soul through Nārāyaṇa (77); Paramātmā is said to pervade the soul with all qualities (98). When the soul rises above all distinctions and attains the Supreme Soul which is above dualism, then it has no sins and no duties and does not become separated from Paramātmā. This is said to be the highest goal of the wise Sāṅkhya teachers (XX). Sāṅkhya Śāstra is, as it were, the incarnation of the formless highest Brahma. He who knows well this old Sāṅkhya teaching, boundless like the wide ocean, is Nārāyaṇa's own self. (Also see chapters 307, 308, 349, 350, 352, 353, etc.)

52. When one considers the theistic and sometimes even Vedāntic character of the Sāṅkhya doctrines taught in these passages, and also the respect and awe with which these teachings have been regarded and accepted in the religious writings throughout the epic and the Purānic periods, one feels irresistibly drawn towards the conclusion arrived at by Joseph Dahlmann that the sober, rational-

istic and atheistic Sāṅkhya philosophy, as it is known to us, might have been preceded by an older and wholly theistic form of the same philosophy, and that this older form of Sāṅkhya philosophy is to be found in the great epic Mahābhārata and especially in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

From this standpoint it can be easily understood why Kapila is counted among the greatest knowers of Brahman and why Sāṅkhya (as also Yoga) is so highly praised in many places in the Mahābhārata. It is only when the theistic elements were left out, that this system came to be regarded as "*Śāstraviruddha*" or contrary to scriptures (cf. Sankara's commentary on Brahmasūtras I. 1. 5 and II. 1. 12).<sup>1</sup>

53. Even the principal elements of the Sāṅkhya doctrines can be derived in their details from the theistic-pantheistic conceptions of the Upaniṣads. Deussen, whose authority on Indian Philosophy is indisputably high among the Western scholars, has successfully undertaken and fulfilled this task in his *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*. For he has traced step by step the genesis of the doctrine of Dualism, the gradual course of evolution of the doctrines of *Guṇas* and liberation, and even the principle of pessimism taught by the Sāṅkhya right up to their ultimate source in the Upaniṣads. Deussen holds accordingly that the philosophy of the epic age in general was not a "*Mischphilosophie*" (eclectic or mixed philosophy), as Holzmann and Garbe maintain, but was rather an *Übergangs philosophie* (a transitional one), i.e., the philosophy of the period between the Vedic and the classical Sanskrit, in which the transition of the Idealism of the Vedānta to the realistic mode of thinking prevalent in the classical Sāṅkhya is effected before our eyes.

54. Hopkins too considers the system of the Gītā to be "in general that of the Sāṅkhya-Yoga," but admits that "there is much which is purely Vedānta." He even goes so far as to assert that the Gītā was probably composed as it stands before there was any formal Vedānta system, and in its original shape without doubt it preceded the formal Sāṅkhya; though both philosophies existed long before they were systematized or reduced to Sūtra form, one has not to imagine them as systems originally distinct and opposed. They rather grew out of a gradual intensification of the opposition in-

<sup>1</sup> Garbe is not right in holding that the Sāṅkhya doctrines were originally non-Brahmanical and the numerous references to the scriptures are only later additions in it.

volved in the conception of Prakṛti (nature) and Māyā (illusion), some regarding these as identical, and others insisting that the latter was not sufficient to explain nature. The first philosophy (and philosophical religion) concerned itself less with the relation of matter to mind (in modern parlance) than with the relation of the individual self (spirit) to the Supreme Spirit. Different explanations of the relation of matter to this Supreme Spirit were long held tentatively by philosophers who would probably have said that either the Sāṅkhya or the Vedānta might be true, but that it was not the chief question. Later came the differentiation of the schools, based mainly on a question that was at first one of secondary importance. (*Vide Hopkins' Religions of India.*)

We shall deal with the problem of the relation between the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta concepts as found in the Gītā, when we consider the philosophical background of our poem. It is enough to observe here that Hopkins has certainly hit upon the right point when he refers the Gītā to a date earlier than that of the formal Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta systems, and this is perfectly in accord with the position of the Gītā in the philosophical history of India, that we shall try to establish on other grounds.

55. Schröder also admits after a careful examination of all the views that a theistic religion like the one taught by the hero and the religious founder Kṛṣṇa, might be quite simply and naturally linked with the Ātman-Brahman teachings of the Upaniṣads, indeed far more naturally than with the atheistic doctrines of the Sāṅkhya.

56. Thus the fact that at the time of its origin, the Sāṅkhya system had not assumed its present form and that the word "Sāṅkhya" was used rather in the sense of speculative philosophy in general and of a mode of thought influenced by Vedāntism and Theism in particular, is established by reference to the above-mentioned cases of the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad and the Mokṣadharmas as well as to the general convergence of the opinions of such scholars as Deussen, Max Müller, Hopkins, Dahlmann and Schröder.

57. (viii) Garbe cannot meet this objection with the reply that the Sāṅkhya system, when combined with the Yoga, could offer a theistic basis for the Gītā. For the Yoga system itself is, as Garbe recognizes, "only externally furnished with a theistic form (Etikette) in so far as the idea of God in the Yoga sūtras is grafted upon its framework in a quite external and mediated fashion, which disturbs the natural sequence of the context," while theism forms an



indispensable and essential constituent of the religious philosophy of the Gîtá. Garbe is compelled to go further and maintain that the Yoga philosophy has borrowed the conception of God from the Bhágavata religion and that the Bhágavatas have in turn adopted the idea of Yoga and so transformed it as to give it the meaning of devotion to God. Here also Garbe betrays his lack of appreciation of the Upaniṣad literature. For the assumption of a mutual influencing of the religion of Bhágavatas and the system of Yoga Philosophy is not only historically without any conclusive evidence but also theoretically quite inadmissible and unnecessary, when one considers that the concept of Yoga as well as that of Íśvara are found in the Upaniṣads of very ancient times. As Deussen shows, the Yoga philosophy is a perfectly legitimate and intelligible consequence of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. Already in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, 8. 15, Bṛhadárányaka Upaniṣad, 1. 5. 23, Svetásvatara Upaniṣad, II. 3, 4, 8-10 are to be met with certain processes of mental disciplines corresponding to such yoga elements as Pratyáhára, Práṇáyáma, etc., and even the term Yoga is used in its technical sense in the Katha Upaniṣad, I. 2. 12, 11, 3, 18, Svetásvatara Upaniṣad II. 12, 13, VI. 13, etc. Indeed the theory and the practice of Yoga had developed, at first, in connection with the religion of the Upaniṣad period and not out of the soil of the atheistical Sánkhyā doctrines. Why then should we assume that the Gîtá philosophy, the root of which lies unmistakably in the Upaniṣad or the Vedánta, has borrowed the concept of Yoga from a foreign system of a later period, viz., the Sánkhyā-Yoga, especially in view of the fact that the term Yoga has been used to convey different meanings in different places of the Gîtá, and that there is no mention in it of the details and the excesses of the traditional Yoga.

58. (ix) According to Garbe, the main principles of the Sánkhyā system are found in their spotless purity in the following verses of the Gîtá :— II. 11-16, 18-30 ; III. 27-29 ; V. 14 ; VII. 4-5, VIII. 19, etc. On a close examination, however, one who is acquainted with the older Upaniṣads will find that these verses contain nothing surprisingly new, nothing that would require the help of an atheistical philosophy for its explanation. The ideas contained in Gîtá II. 11-13, viz., the conception of the distinction between the body and the soul, the freedom and the immortality of the spirit, continuance of life after death, re-birth (transmigration), etc., find expression already in the oldest Upaniṣads and indeed make up the essential

foundation of their thoughts. The views of the activity of Prakṛti, the passivity of the Puruṣa, the three Guṇas, five elements, eleven organs of sense, five objects of sense, Ahaṅkāra, Buddhi, and Avyakta, which meet us in the so-called Sāṅkhya portions of the Gītā, are either expressly mentioned in the later but pre-epic Upaniṣads like Katha, Svetāśvatara, and Maitrāyaṇī<sup>1</sup> or can be explained as continuation, expansion or combination of the Upaniṣadic thoughts. In fact, as we have said before, Deussen has derived the whole of the Sāṅkhya system with its chief elements (viz., Dualism, evolutionary grades, Guṇas, pessimism and theory of liberation) step by step from the Upaniṣad philosophy.

59. It is therefore much more reasonable to assume that our author has received the so-called Sāṅkhya views as his spiritual heritage from the Katha, Svetāśvatara, Maitrāyaṇī and other Upaniṣads, and that the present Sāṅkhya system is nothing but a later development of the same stream of thought, than to hold the opposite view that the religion of the Gītā was founded on the atheistical Sāṅkhya philosophy. Garbe himself has observed that some of the terms of the Sāṅkhya, such as Buddhi, Ahaṅkāra, Manas, Prakṛti, Ātman, are not always used in the Gītā in their technical significance. Still he does not admit that our text belongs to an earlier period than that of the systematic philosophy, but rather discovers Sāṅkhya ideas everywhere in the Gītā, in the verses in which such ideas easily lend themselves to be traced from the Upaniṣad literature, e.g., the idea of the evolution and re-absorption of the world (G. VIII. 18, 19) as well as the idea of the World-periods, the physiological representations of the inner organ and the senses, the contrast between matter and spirit, etc. (Gītā III. 40, 42; XIII. 5). All these, says Garbe, are pure Sāṅkhya teachings, as if he had not the slightest suspicion of their being Upaniṣad doctrines as well.<sup>2</sup>

60. (x) The condemnation of Vedic rites and of the ceremonies performed according to Brahmanic rituals is also, according to

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Gītā. V. 13 with Svet. III. 18, G. XIII. 13, 14, with Svet. III. 16, 17, G. II. 19, 20, 29, with Katha II. 19, 18, 7. Also *vide* Sveta. Up. 1, 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, IV. 5-7, V. 5, 7, 10, 12, VI. 2-4, 16, Katha III. 10-13, VI. 7-8, Praśna, IV. 7, 8, Mund. I. 1, 8, 9, II. 1, 3 with Chhānd. VI. 8.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Gītā matter and spirit are only the lower and higher natures of God and this is also the position of many Upaniṣads. Svet. III. 2, IV. 1. V. 3. VI. 3-4, Kath. VI. 7, 8, III. 10, Praśna IV. 8, Ait. I. 1-4, Chhānd. III. 19, VI. 2. 1-3, 3. 1-9, 1-4, Br. I. 2. 1. I. 4. 1. V. 10, V. 14, 15. I. Regv. 10, 190. 3. Taitt. III. 1, II. 1-7, Mund. I. 1. 7-8. II. 1. 1.

Garbe, a genuine Sāṅkhya view, notwithstanding the recognition of the authority of the Vedas by Sāṅkhya and the denial of the same by such Upaniṣads as *Iśa* (9-11), *Kena* (I. 4-8), *Katha* (II. 4-8, 14, 22), *Mundaka* (I. 1. 4, 5, I. 2. 8), and *Svetāsvatara* (IV. 8, 9).

This one-sided and prejudiced view of an otherwise profound scholar seems to be very unfortunate, but can be easily explained on a psychological ground, viz., that Garbe's long occupation with the Sāṅkhya philosophy might have generated in his mind a psychical illusion, owing to which he saw every philosophical teaching in other texts or systems as coloured by the Sāṅkhya.

61. We have thus seen that the assumptions of Holzmann, Hopkins and Garbe are all alike unfounded. The Gītā can neither be regarded as a work originally pantheistic, and later on theistically interpolated through Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu worshippers, nor as a Vedāntic re-handling of a religious text-book of the Bhāgavata sect, philosophically grounded on the Sāṅkhya-Yoga doctrines.

I am inclined to believe that the Bhagavad-Gītā may have received some insignificant additions after it had been inserted in the Mahābhārata and recognized as a Vaiṣṇava scripture. As far as I can judge, the only verses which admit of being regarded as interpolations are IX. 11-13 and XI. 41-42, as these contain personal references to Kṛṣṇa and are ill-suited to the general conception of God in the Gītā.

## SECTION II. THE SO-CALLED VEDĀNTIC INTERPOLATIONS IN THE GĪTĀ

62. Now I turn to that part of Garbe's Introduction to the Translation of the Gītā, where he has determined the exact number of verses in the original Gītā and laid his finger on the individual verses which, according to his theory, are later additions.

(i) As regards the pantheistic verses, we have already proved that they do not at all contradict the theistic basis of our poem, but rather indicate its relationship with the Upaniṣadic thought. Therewith we restore to our poem 134 out of 170 verses banned by Garbe. It is remarkable that under the so-called Vedāntic interpolations Garbe includes many verses which to the Indian mind convey no pantheistic meaning at all, but would unconditionally pass for theistic ones in so far as they give expression to the Divine omnipresence and omnipotence in a way peculiar to the Indian thought. Thus the

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verses VII. 7-II, IX. 4-6, 16-19, X. 12, 20-42, XI. 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 40, XIII. 13, 17, XV. 12, 15, of the *Gîtá* exhibit not only the finest poetical art of the author, but also the sublimest notion of God conceivable by a theistic worshipper. Even the devoutest Bhága-vata and Vaiṣṇava would not exclude a single verse out of these passages as pantheistic and therefore inappropriate to the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu. For as implied in G. XI. 40, God is to an Indian theist, "present in everything, pervades everything, and therefore is all." It is from this standpoint that God is said to be the fluidity in water, light in the sun and the moon, the life and the seed of all beings, and regarded as the sacrifice, the drink, the food, butter and fire, and identified with Viṣṇu, Indra, Śiva and others. And yet God's reality is not wholly exhausted in them and He is not conceived as wholly immanent in them; for, as G. X. 42, expressly says, God always pervades the whole universe only with a part of His Being and remains therefore ever transcendent. In the *Gîtá* VII. 11, the poet carefully avoids Pantheism by representing God as the strength of the strong in so far as it is free from desire and passion and as desire in all beings in so far as they do not violate the law. That God burns (or gives heat in the form of the sun), withholds the rain, or showers it (*Gîtá* IX. 19), that it is the Divine splendour that lends brightness to the sun, the moon and the fire, that it is the Divine glory that, permeating the soil, supports all the beings by His energy and having become the sap brings the plants to life and nourishes them (XV. 12-15)—these thoughts are not likely to be contested by any pious Indian as antitheistic. And yet according to Garbe all this is pantheism and must be made a clean sweep of from the text of the *Bhagavad-Gîtá*. I believe this learned scholar confounds Indian theism with Christian Deism, and has characterized as pantheism all the verses in the *Gîtá* that are not compatible with the latter.

63. (ii) Again Garbe regards G. III. 9-18 and IV. 13, 32-33 as Vedántic-ritualistic interpolations. I admit that the subjects treated in these verses are not at all important for the main thought of our poem and therefore can be easily removed from it without creating a perceptible gap. But I am inclined to find in them too a proof of the comprehensive character and the reconciling spirit of our poem. It has throughout combined the lower and the higher, the popular and the philosophical standpoints, and placed side by side the sacrificial ceremonies and materialistic worship of the masses

and the highest spiritual and devotional adoration without abandoning at the same time the Vedāntic conception of God. Similarly the selfish motives and worldly considerations set forth in G. II. 34-37, represent a line of thought directly contradictory to the ideas expressed in G. II. 38-47 and yet both are equally valuable for the various classes and grades of men. The various kinds of sacrificial performances are enumerated and recommended beside the worship of other gods in semi-idolatrous forms (e.g., G. IV. 12, 23, 24, 33, VII. 21-23, IX. 15, 16, 20-21, 23, 26, XVII. 11-13, XVIII. 5, 6), and yet the author has repeatedly and emphatically declared that these methods are of a lower quality and of a lesser value than the worship of the supreme Soul in faith and love, the knowledge of God and the performance of duties without interest and regard for consequences (e.g., G. II. 42-46, etc.). From the same standpoint G. XII. 9-12 expressly offers us several alternatives of religious practices so that failing in the one the seeker after spiritual life might resort to the next lower mode of discipline suited to his capacity. There is therefore nothing against the presumption that G. III. 9-18 represents this general spirit of the Gîtā. With regard to G. XVII. Garbe remarks that the author has here mentioned the various kinds of sacrifices, the custom of paying respect to the Brahmanas and the practice of reading aloud the Vedas, which were known to him through the cultural life of his people, in order to bring them under the scheme of Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, without the idea of recommending them. But this opinion is hardly tenable in view of the didactic character of the whole poem. The threefold division itself signifies the preferability of the one (the *sattva* type) and the condemnation of the other (the *tamas* type). Moreover in G. XVIII. 5, 6, sacrifices, charities, and ascetic practices are recognized as the means of purification for the wise. When Garbe replies in this case that in contrast with the *Mimāṃsā*, any regard for consequences has been forbidden here, he ignores that the same condition applies also to G. III. 9-18, as the verse immediately following this passage enjoins "So do thy work, but do it without attachment" (G. III. 19). It is hardly necessary to assume the verses G. IV. 31-32 to have been interpolated if we read them in the light of the spiritualistic interpretation of the sacrificial religion that we find in the Gîtā. Nor is it at all justifiable to leave out the verses G. IV. 34-35, which are some of the finest utterances of a poet, teaching the noblest duty of reverence and service due to our teachers and the sublimest ideal



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of God-consciousness, which has always characterized Indian thought.

64. (iii) The same is true of the Brahministic teachings about the times favourable and unfavourable to the dying (G. VIII. 23-27). I admit that the higher principles of the *Gîtá* have nothing to do with these externalities. But we have in these verses only an imitation of the *Chhândogya Upaniṣad*, V. 3-10 and *Bṛhadaranyaka Upaniṣad*, VI. 2, and this is quite in keeping with the whole character of the poem which, as we have repeatedly affirmed, is pervaded throughout by the *Upaniṣadic* thought. It seems really very strange and unfortunate that the old Indian sages and poets used to recommend such superstitious ideas and rituals besides many highest metaphysical thoughts and deepest religious conceptions. It is nevertheless inadmissible for us to maintain that those thinkers were then in a position to recognize the inappropriateness, incompatibility or discord between their noble and sublime philosophy and their imperfect cosmology and crude theory of the hereafter. Such contradictions are found practically everywhere in the ancient literature of the world: (cf. Jesus' belief in the evil spirits and eternal hell and the cosmogony of the Bible). The author of the *Gîtá* was by no means independent of, or uninfluenced by the social environment and the intellectual atmosphere of his age and he has included in his poem some of these ideas which we, with our present-day scientific and philosophical training, consider to be untenable, but which even to this day serve to make this ancient poem intelligible to the masses and acceptable as a popular religious scripture. Garbe goes too far when he tries to purge our text of all the antiquated ideas and to clothe it with a garb that can wholly suit the twentieth century.

65. (iv) The use of the word *Máyá* in the *Gîtá* is supposed to lend another support to Garbe's theory of Interpolation. For in G. IV. 6 and G. XVIII. 61, the term *Máyá* has the old meaning of magic or miraculous power, while in G. VII. 14, 15, 25 (which, according to Garbe, are Vedántic interpolations) the word is used in its technical meaning, viz., cosmical illusion. But as Dr. P. D. Sastri has sought to prove in his "Doctrine of Maya" the word *Máyá* has been used in both senses throughout the whole Vedic literature (cf. Deussen's *Philosophy of the Upaniṣads*, pp. 214-5)—and in fact the one leads inevitably to the other meaning. As regards the uses of the word in the *Gîtá*, Hopkins has rightly said,

"In not a single case is it necessary to interpret the term *Máyá* in the Vedāntic, i.e., in Śāṅkara's sense (*vide the Great Epic of India*, 119). For in G. VII. 14, 15, 25, exactly as in G. IV. 6 and XVIII. 61, the author speaks of the magical power of God by which the ignorant, the evil-doers, the fools are deceived, so that they cannot know God and it is by the same miraculous art, that the unborn and undying Being appears to be born again and again (G. IV. 6). The same thought appears in another form in G. VII. 13, but Garbe would not like to exclude this verse, because the word "*Máyá*" is not expressly mentioned there.

66. (v) Another proof of Garbe's incorrect reading and wrong interpretation of our text as well as of his prejudice against all that appears on the surface to be Vedāntic, is found in the fact that he has put a ban on the verses G. V. 6, 7, 10, 16-22, 24-26, while retaining the verses G. II. 48, 55-57, G. III. 28, G. IV. 19, 20, 22, 23, although the principal idea underlying all these latter passages is exactly the same as in the former. The only distinction between these passages lies in the presence of the word "*Brahma*" in the one and its absence in the other. But this word also signifies a personal God and in this sense the verse in question can be explained quite well. Similarly G. XIII. 23 entirely agrees with G. IV. 14, and yet Garbe has retained the latter, while leaving out the former as an interpolation. I have already dealt with the verses G. XVIII. 50 and 54, where the poet uses such words as *Brahmabhūta* and *Brahmanirvāṇa*, which are unbearable for Garbe. The verses G. VIII. 1-4 which are also regarded by Garbe as Vedāntic interpolations may be restored to our text in the same manner.

67. (vi) Again, is it not absurd to maintain, as Garbe does, that the verses G. XVIII. 54 and G. XIV. 27—where a distinction is drawn between *Brahma* and *Kṛṣṇa* and where the latter is evidently regarded as higher than the former—are Vedāntic interpolations? If a rehandling of the text is to be thought of here at all, could it not be nearer the truth to assume that here a worshipper of *Kṛṣṇa*, filled with sectarian enthusiasm, had taken the pen in hand with a view to suggest the superiority of his own religion over the Vedāntic view?

68. (vii) G. XVII. 23-28 appears no doubt to be out of place here, but I cannot agree with Garbe when he maintains that the ideas expressed in these verses are as unsuitable to the *Bhagavad-Gītā*

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in general as possible. They rather confirm the Vedāntic character of our poem. Moreover, the verse 28 is related to the question asked by Arjuna in the beginning of the chapter and restores the unity of the context which was broken by the detailed exposition of the threefold classifications in G. XVII. 7-22.

69. (viii) In G. III. 23 Garbe finds another instance of interpolation on the ground that the last line of this verse is almost the same as that of G. IV. 11 and as the latter is grammatically correct while the former contains an irregularity, G. IV. 11 must be older than G. III. 23, as Böhlingk also remarks. Moreover, adds Garbe, the wording of the second line of the verse has here quite a different meaning from that in G. IV. 11. But Garbe forgets that strict conformity to rules of grammar has not always been a virtue with great poetical geniuses, and the author of the Divine Song could certainly lay claim to a slight concession in the use of grammatical forms. As regards the same mode of expression being employed to convey different meanings, there is an instance to the point in the *Gītā* itself, viz., the first line of G. III. 35 agrees with the first line of G. XVIII. 47 only in words, while there is a considerable difference in their significance, as can be gathered from a reference to their contexts.

### SECTION III. THE SO-CALLED CONTRADICTIONS IN THE *GĪTĀ*

70. In the verses of the *Gītā* VII. 26, IX. 29, and XI. 7, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, Garbe has discovered some philosophical contradictions (of thought) concerning the peculiar conception of God in the *Gītā*, which certainly appear to be very difficult to remove. (i) According to G. VII. 26, nobody knows God, and yet according to G. VII. 24 only the fools do not know him. (ii) God is in one place (G. IX. 29) conceived of as treating all beings equally alike, so that to Him no one is contemptible and no one lovable. (Cf. also G. V. 29, where God is said to be the friend of all beings.) And yet in other places we find it stated that such and such men are specially dear to God (G. VII. 17, XII. 13, etc.). (iii) The Divine form which Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna contains in it the whole world, all gods, all beings and all things, and is without a beginning, a middle, or an end (G. XI. 7, 13, 15), and yet in G. XI. 20-23 all the worlds, all the supernatural and spiritual beings are said to be looking at Kṛṣṇa (i.e., the Divine form) with wonder and astonishment, and in verse 32

of the same chapter Kṛṣṇa is reported to be declaring, "I am actively engaged in destroying the worlds"—an expression ill-befitting an omnipresent Being, who pervades and fills the whole universe through and through.

However insoluble these contradictions may appear to be it has been possible for our learned commentators who were gifted by providence with a pious insight into the nature of God and His relation to man and the world, to discover and comprehend some deeper meanings in these passages, and thereby to offer a solution for these apparent inconsistencies in our text.

71. (i) It is generally recognized by the religious minds of the civilized nations that in His transcendent nature God is unknowable to man and yet He reveals Himself out of grace to the blessed few. Theologically considered, there appears to be a contradiction here, but there are some valuable elements of truth in such modes of expression current in many of the religious text-books of the world. "The eye does not reach there, nor speech, nor mind: we do not perceive nor conceive that which is beyond the known and above the unknown." (Kena. I. 3.) "He who does not conceive of It (i.e., Brahma) has rightly conceived. He who thinks of It does not know. It is unknown to those who know and known to those who do not know." (Kena. II. 3.) "That from which the words come back with thought, without finding it, the sage knowing that Brahman as joy never fears." (Taitt. II. 4.) These and similar passages in the Upaniṣad may be quoted in support of the ideas underlying the verses of the Gītā.

Thus God is neither wholly unknown nor is He wholly known. I do not see how even pure Theism could deny this unknowability of God, in as much as the true nature of God as a noumenal substance remains above time, space and causality, whereas human knowledge is conditioned by time, space, and causality.<sup>1</sup>

It is just this thought that Kṛṣṇa gives utterance to in the verse G. X. 2, the theistic character of which is doubtless. Many mystic saints of the East and of the West have declared the Divine glories to be unspeakable and unthinkable, and yet to be not inaccessible to the intuitive apprehension of the pure in heart, to whom God chooses to reveal Himself out of His infinite love and compassion.

<sup>1</sup> Garbe's supplementary note notwithstanding. Cf. G. IV. 6.—God is without birth and without change, i.e., timeless and causeless.

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72. (ii) The same is true of God's equal regard and love for all men. A pure theistic religion like Christianity also speaks of God, that "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matthew v. 45) and yet promises special blessings for the poor in spirit, for the meek, for the merciful, for the pure in heart and so on (Matthew v. 3-10).

On the other hand, a deeper spiritual meaning underlies the verse G. IX. 29. God's love is certainly infinite and therefore equal for all men, for the good as well as for the bad. But those who are devoted to Him in worship have a pure heart and can see God, whereas the sinners and evildoers cannot see the omnipresent God, owing to "the eye of their souls" becoming defective. As the commentator Madhusūdana says, "Just as the sun shines everywhere, but becomes reflected only in a clean mirror and not in an opaque earthen vessel, and yet we cannot say that since the sun is reflected in the mirror and not in the earthen plate, it loves the one and hates the other, so is God said to have equal regard for all beings and yet to reveal Himself in the pure heart of the worshipper, remaining unknown to the unholy mind of the unbelievers, we cannot therefore say that he is friendly towards the one and unfriendly towards the other." Thus it is only from the human standpoint that we represent the pious men as being dearer to God than the unbelievers.

73. (iii) Concerning the verses G. XI. 7, 13, 15, it is to be observed that the revelation of the Divine form should be understood only as a symbolical representation of the highest spiritual experience of communion with God or of God-vision in rare moments of mystical contemplation. We should not therefore take these descriptions too literally or verbally, for God is obviously supersensible in His true nature and cannot be seen by the physical eyes. When a man wants to see the whole universe as the body of God, it is physically inevitable that he himself too participates in this Divine body as a limb and cannot therefore stand outside this divine form as a spectator nor offer prayer to Him as a worshipper. Again, we have to remember that the revelation of God was meant only for Arjuna, and only to him was granted by God's grace that "eye of the soul" which alone can perceive the Divine Māyā or mystery, and it would be therefore meaningless to say, "the three worlds are trembling at the sight of thy wonderful and austere form, the Rudras and others gaze thee with astonishment," and the like except in a symbolical



manner. The spiritual meaning and the underlying idea of this chapter confirm all that we have said about the peculiar character of the Gītā.

74. This chapter presents for instance both the immanent and the transcendent conception of God. In G. X. 20 Kṛṣṇa says, "I am the self that dwells in the heart of all beings; I am the beginning and the middle and also the end of being." Thus God is immanent in every soul and pervades the whole world. But this He does with one part of His being only (*vide* G. X. 42), which means that God is transcendent. Now, it is these ideas, which are put in the mouth of Kṛṣṇa in Chapter X, that the poet has tried to represent symbolically in sensible forms in Chapter XI. It is strange that Garbe sets aside as interpolation the most beautiful and highly poetical description of the manifestations (*Bibhuti*) of God in Chapter X, and yet retains as original the substance of Chapter XI, without realizing that the latter cannot be properly understood without the help of the former. The so-called contradictions in Chapter XI pointed out by Garbe are removed when we take the verses 7, 13, 15, 16, 18, 19 as representing God to be immanent and the verses 20-23 as representing Him to be transcendent.

75. We find another explanation of this apparent inconsistency in the verses 25-34, where God is pictured as the fearful, ruthless incarnation of Death, who causes the destruction of men. Here, too, as the supporter of the world, God embraces all beings in His body, but as the destroyer He is different, so to speak, from His own loving form, so that the poet is not inconsistent with himself when he says, "As the various streams of water flow to the ocean, as the moths or insects fly to the burning fire with great haste for their own destruction, so do men enter into the blazing mouth of God." If there is a contradiction here, it arises out of the limitation of human knowledge and of human language, i.e., out of the impossibility of representing in sensible terms the highest philosophical truths and religious experiences. Such a defect, if it is a defect at all, is certainly excusable in the poet of the Gītā all the more as his attempt in this symbolical description bears the marks of originality and has been very successful as an aid towards spiritualizing, refining and elevating the popular representations of Divinity in India.

Garbe's Christian and deistic conception of God hinders him from

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grasping the immanent conception of God in Indian Theism and so he suspects Vedántic interpolation of a pantheistic type in these verses.

76. Thus everywhere we see that what appears at first sight to be a contradiction in our poem is really an imaginary one or is due to misinterpretation, and disappears in the light of higher critical judgment and deeper spiritual insight. The same consideration holds good in the case of the Bible, where Jesus says, "I am not come here to destroy but to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17), and yet repeatedly affirms in other places, "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you," etc., as if he had formulated a new code (Matt. v. 21-44). Again, when Jesus says, "Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against the mother-in-law," he seems to contradict his own saying, "I come not to destroy." Or, to take another example (Mark ix. 40), "He that is not against us is for us" seems to be inconsistent with Matt. xii. 30, "He that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Nevertheless pious Christian scholars do not see any contradiction in these passages, but rather reconcile them into a deeper and inner unity.<sup>1</sup>

77. Garbe's attempt to discover a defect in all these smaller details of our text, which we have now found to be blameless, proves rather his own narrowness and one-sidedness and his misdirected and perverted scholarly enthusiasm. Well could an Indian commentator, like Mallinath or Kullukabhattacha, raise a protest against his criticism of the Gîtá and exclaim in the slightly altered lines of Goethe :

"Was ihr nicht fasst, das fehlt euch ganz und gar,  
Was ihr nicht gefallt, glaubt ihr sei nicht wahr,  
Was ihr nicht passt, hat für euch kein Gewicht."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Of course we are not, as some Christian apologetics do in respect of the Bible, accepting every word of the Gîtá as a divine revelation or as an infallible truth.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from *Faust*, meaning :

"What you cannot grasp, that do you miss wholly and entirely,  
What pleases you not, that you believe not to be true.  
What suits you not, that has for you no weight."

## SECTION IV. FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON GARBE'S VIEWS

78. Lastly, in support of his theory Garbe calls our attention to the circumstance that through the exclusion of 146 verses believed by him to be unoriginal, no real gap occurs in our text, but on the contrary, the connection of the context previously interrupted is restored through the removal of such verses, for example, as G. III. 9-18, VI. 27-32, VII. 7-11, VIII. 20, IX. 6. Unfortunately our poem is so composed that many other verses, and indeed a whole chapter or two, can be taken away from it without producing any noticeable break in the sequence.<sup>1</sup> As Garbe knows, the renowned German scholar, Wilhelm Von Humboldt, was inclined to close the original and genuine Bhagavad-Gítá with the eleventh chapter. Hopkins in his *Great Epic of India* (p. 225) calls the first fourteen chapters of the Gítá "the heart of the Gítá." Garbe himself admits that the last songs (chapters) fall far behind the preceding ones and assumes that the author's power had declined towards the end of the poem.<sup>2</sup>

79. I admit that the lack of a systematic method and the repetition of the same thought in different passages favour the supposition of interpolations in the Gítá. For instance, G. II. 31-38 seems to me to be somewhat out of place, for the verses preceding them and those succeeding them are philosophically well-connected, and the removal of these few verses from the middle would restore the unity of thought which is disturbed by their intrusion. Moreover, the ideas expressed in G. II. 31-38 are too utilitarian to allow of their fitting in with the doctrine of disinterested action taught in the Gítá. The same is true of G. III. 30-32. And yet Garbe does not think of excluding these verses. Similarly, following Garbe's method we could regard G. X. 10-11 and G. XII. 1 as immediately linked with one another in the original form of the Gítá, and therefore remove the eighty-six verses intervening between them (i.e., G. X. 12-42 and the whole of Chapter XI. 1-55) as interpolations: because the question asked by Arjuna in the beginning of the twelfth chapter fits very nicely with G. X. 10-11, both in thought and expression; and the very wording of the opening question in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. quotation from Wilhelm Von Humboldt, *supra*.

<sup>2</sup> I do not agree with this last remark of Garbe's for in the last chapters some of the principal teachings of the Gítá receive a vigorous and beautiful expression and all the ethical, philosophical and religious doctrines are briefly summarized and classified with special reference to their application in practical life.

## GARBE'S THEORY EXAMINED FURTHER

G. XII. 1 reminds us of the ideas and words of X. 10-11 (cf. "*Satata-yuktānām Bhajātām*" in G. X. 10 with "*Satata-yuktā Bhaktāh*" in XII. 1) so that even if all the intervening eighty-six verses are left out no break in the context will be perceptible. And yet in the whole of the Gītā there are few verses that are poetically speaking finer than those lying between X. 12 and XII. 1.

80. I have already remarked that only four verses in the Gītā, viz., IX. 11, 12 and XI. 41-42, seem to me to be entirely out of keeping with its moral and religious spirit, and create a suspicion in my mind that they may have been later additions made by sectarian advocates of the Vaiṣṇava cult. But I would not like to touch this sacred poem with my profane hand and strike out a single verse that does not fit in with my idea of consistency. For, to quote again from the words of wisdom uttered by Max Müller, "Where we can never hope to gain access to the original documents, it is almost a duty to discourage the work of reconstructing an old text by so-called conjectural emendation or critical omission."

### SECTION V. CONCLUSIONS OF PART I

81. While reserving for discussion in the next two Parts the problem as to whether the Gītā was a genuine part of the original Mahābhārata, as believed by Telang, or whether it was inserted in the body of the latter at a later stage of its development in the place of an older dialogue, as suggested by Holzmann, and also the problem as to whether the Gītā may be regarded as an independent work, which originally existed in the form of an Upaniṣad before its insertion in the Mahābhārata, as is suggested by the Mahābhārata itself and by some Indian commentators and as is also conjectured by Hopkins, I have come to the following conclusions as a result of my discussions in this Part:—

(i) The text of the Gītā has remained substantially unaltered in spite of numberless interpolations that have taken place in other portions of the Great Epic, as was believed by so many able scholars like Telang, Lassen, Schlegel, Pratapchandra Roy and Wilhelm Von Humboldt. (ii) The Gītā is naturally linked both by language and by thought with the thoughts of the Upaniṣads and has always been associated by the Indian tradition more with the Vedānta Philosophy based on the latter than with the Sāṅkhya-Yoga. Garbe is therefore entirely mistaken in holding the philosophical

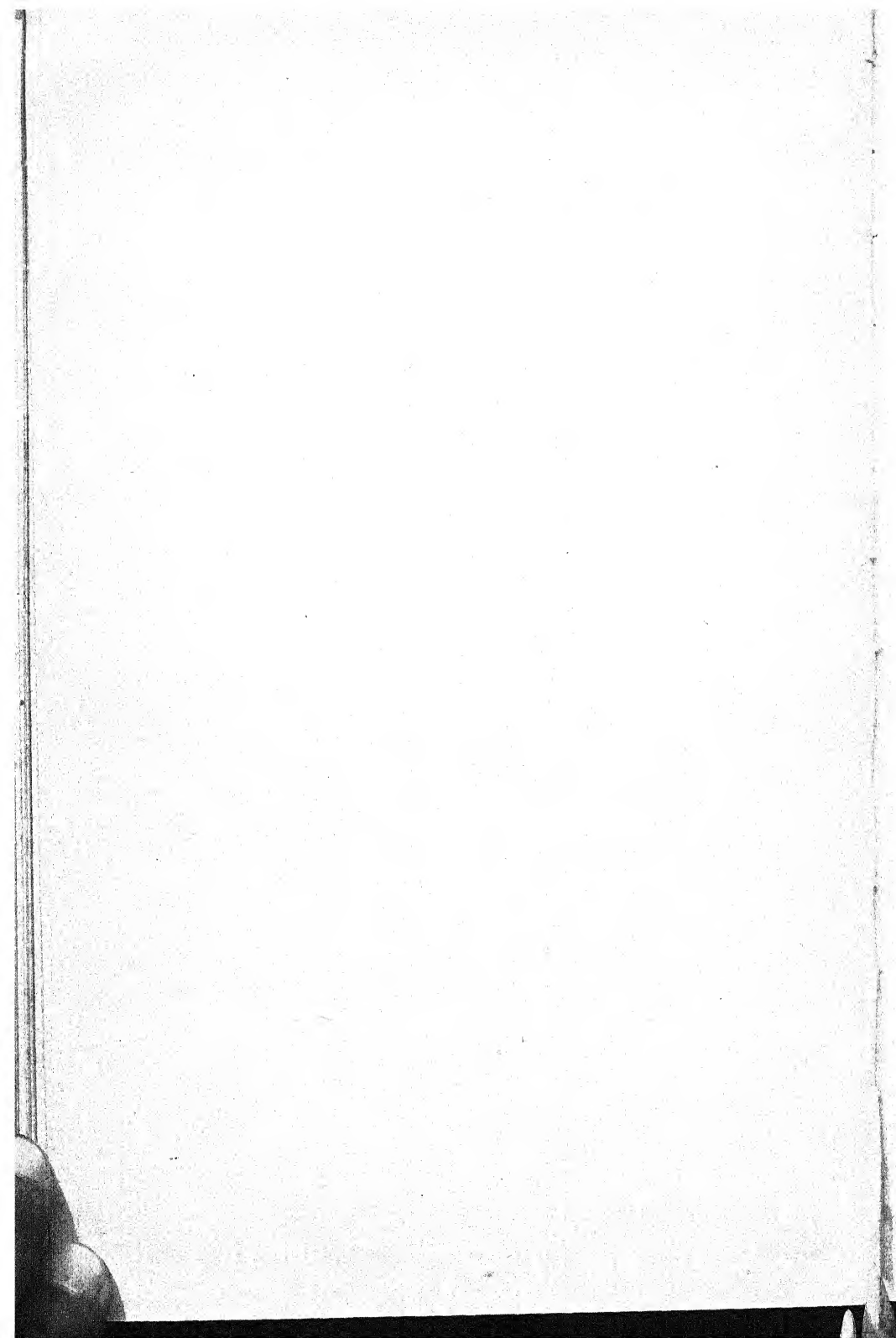
## BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

elements of our poem to be founded on the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system. In this view I am supported by Paul Deussen, Edward Hopkins, Leopold Von Schröder and Joseph Dahlmann, as well as by the Indian commentators in general. (iii) The theory of interpolation in the Gītā as set forth by Richard Garbe is entirely without foundation, for the mixture of theism and pantheism, the theory of incarnation and the elements of Sāṅkhya-Yoga philosophy contained in the Bhagavad-Gītā may very well be explained by reference to the philosophical genius and the religious history of the Indian people. (iv) The Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā is not the same historical or mythical person who is deified in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures like the Harivaṁśa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. Nor are the teachings of the Gītā the same as those of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mokṣadharmā episode in the Great Epic which is associated with the Bhāgavata religion. (v) The Gītā was not written by a sectarian poet for a particular sect, but is meant to be and has always been a sacred code of devotion, philosophical insight, and moral and religious culture, universally accepted by all seekers after God, irrespective of caste, creed and colour. (vi) Lastly, I have found reasons to suspect that a few verses here and there betray a foreign origin and may have been added by interested sectarian writers, and these seem to have found entrance into this popular scripture along with other interpolations. These conclusions will be confirmed as we proceed to discuss in detail the relation between the Gītā on the one hand and the Upaniṣads, the Mahābhārata, and the Bhāgavata scriptures on the other hand. A right perspective of the relations among these sacred books of the Hindus in the light of modern scholarship is very important for a proper understanding of the philosophical and religious foundations of the teachings of the Gītā.



PART TWO

THE GÎTÂ AND THE GREAT EPIC OF INDIA



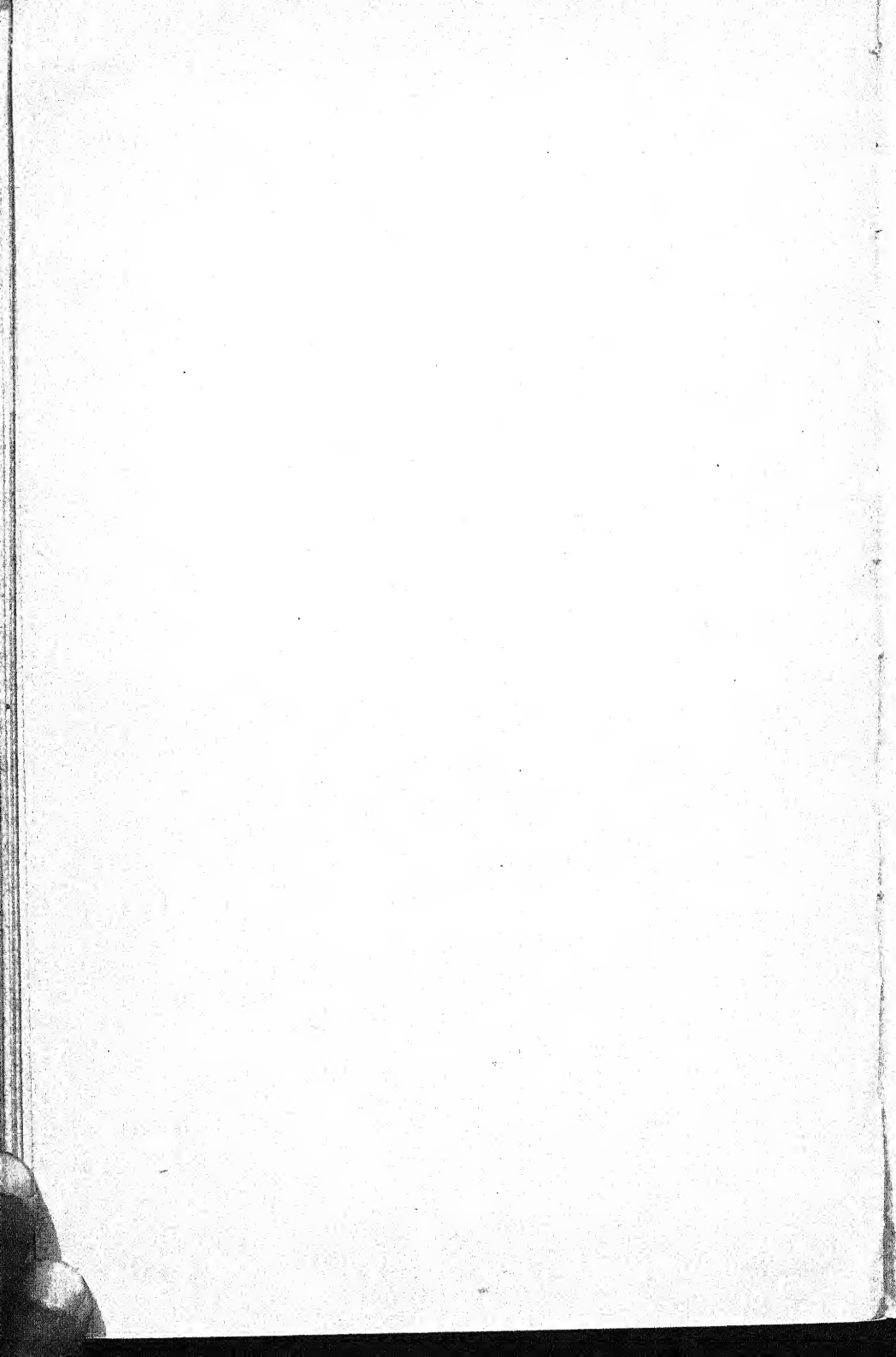
## CHAPTER I

### THE ORIGINAL GĪTĀ AND THE EPIC GĪTĀ

#### SECTION I. THE PROBLEMS AWAITING SOLUTION

82. It is impossible to understand the full significance of the Bhagavad-Gītā and to appreciate the true value of its teachings — both philosophical and religious—without determining its exact relation to the great Epic, Mahābhārata, which in its present form is an encyclopædic collection of epic and didactic materials, including within its gigantic body the Bhagavad-Gītā and other episodes of religio-philosophical contents. We shall have to consider in this connection such questions of fundamental character and of deeper significance as the following, viz., (1) whether the Gītā has always been an integral part of the Mahābhārata and was contained as such in the earliest stage of the development of the Epic, or (2) whether the Gītā could be regarded as a later addition made to the great Epic by interested diaskeuasts along with other interpolations. In case this latter alternative is accepted, (3) what was the precise form of the original Gītā as distinguished from the present Epic Gītā.

83. Evidently these questions cannot be adequately answered without a satisfactory solution of the problems relating to the origin, the nature and the object of the Mahābhārata, viz., the problems as to whether it is a genuine history of the Kuru Princes or a purely fictitious invention of the epic art, as to the connection between its narrative events and didactic episodes, as to the growth and development of the Epic through successive stages, and as to the influence of the Vedic and the Bhāgavata religion on its origin and evolution. But even if we consider the Gītā in its present form as a part of the Epic Mahābhārata, we cannot dispense with the necessity of examining the structure of the great Epic and its bearing on the Episode, for the Mahābhārata is related to the Gītā as the macrocosm to the microcosm. Viewed from this standpoint, the Gītā must be treated as an epitome or miniature form of the



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Mahābhārata, especially with regard to the philosophical and religious teachings, so that the plan and the purpose of the Epic are reflected and reproduced in the Episode, and the part is organically related to the whole. Thus if the Gītā be an integral part of the Mahābhārata, it should exhibit the same features and the same characteristics as the latter and have not only the unity of language and thought with other parts of the great Epic, but also conform to the general design and structure of the latter, and this is exactly the position that the traditional commentators of the Bhagavad-Gītā have as a rule accepted, and that one of the greatest scholars of modern India, the late Bālagangādhara Tilak, has sought to establish by scientific arguments and historical evidences.

84. There can be no denying the fact that externally speaking the poetic setting of the Gītā as well as its teachings fit in very well with the Epic story. The episode is inserted in a place in the Epic where there was a real necessity for inducing the hero, Arjuna, to fight and for enabling him to overcome the momentary weakness that apparently overwhelmed him in the beginning of the great war when he first stood face to face with his friends and relations in the opposite camp. The concluding verses of the Gītā also are exactly in keeping with the Epic situation. Besides, there are many superficial resemblances between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata. For example, the Gītā is divided into eighteen discourses just as the great Epic is made up of eighteen chapters or Parvas; the principal speakers of the dialogue in the episode, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, are renowned heroes of the Epic, and they stand in the same relation of friends and occupy the same position of teacher and disciple both in the Gītā and in the Mahābhārata. Moreover, in both the scriptures, Kṛṣṇa appears to play the double role of God and Man, and is not only regarded by other heroes as an incarnation of God, but also declares and reveals Himself as such. Lastly, the Gītā is referred to by name more than once in other parts of the Mahābhārata, which expressly mention this Divine Song as having been actually sung by Vāsudeva or Kṛṣṇa himself in the presence of Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra exactly under circumstances narrated in the first chapter of the Gītā. What could be therefore more reasonable than to assume that the traditional view that the Gītā is an integral part of the Mahābhārata and that its philosophical and religious contents are organically related to

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those of the Epic is historically correct? And yet strangely enough a very different picture presents itself before us when we examine in detail the structure of the Mahābhārata and of the Gītā and compare their various parts with one another as regards language and style, composition and thought, and philosophical doctrines and religious tenets.

85. As a matter of fact, there is considerable divergence of opinion among modern scholars, both Indian and European, with regard to the character of the Mahābhārata, and its relation to the Bhagavad-Gītā, and a critical review of the positions of these scholars will throw a flood of light on the subject under our consideration.

We propose to deal with the following topics, one by one, and discuss the relevant views of eminent scholars in the course of our treatment of each problem :—

1. Can we speak of the original Epic as distinguished from the present Mahābhārata?
2. Is the Gītā an integral part of the Epic?
3. What is the character of the present Mahābhārata and the relation between its historical-narrative and didactic-religious parts?
4. Can the present Epic be treated as a unitary whole?
5. What is the genetic-historical relation between the Epic and the didactic Mahābhārata, with special reference to the Bhagavad-Gītā?
6. What was the original form of the Bhagavad-Gītā? Can it be treated as an Upaniṣadic treatise independent of the Epic relations?

### SECTION II. THE ORIGINAL FORM OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA AND ITS RELATION TO THE GĪTĀ

*(Views of different scholars)*

86. K. T. Telang, in the introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gītā (S.B.E., 1882) maintains that "the Gītā is a genuine portion of the original Mahābhārata" and that "the Text of the Gītā is now exactly in the condition in which it left the hands of the author." We have examined the second part

of his opinion in the last chapter and found reasons to agree with him substantially on the point.

When, however, we take up the first part for consideration, we find it open to serious doubts and objections.

87. It is first of all necessary to have an exact idea as to what the original Mahābhārata signifies. (i) According to Hopkins, the origin of the Mahābhārata is to be sought in a 'Bhāratikathā,' which, gathering round itself the traditional legends and songs of the bards, afterwards developed into a Panduite tale of heroes, and it was after 200 B.C. that a number of didactic poems, including the Gītā, were inserted in it. (ii) Adolf Holzmann, on the other hand, traces the origin of the Mahābhārata to the ancient stories sung by court poets, which were afterwards systematically arranged somewhat in the form of the present Epic by a Buddhistic poet of the court of King Asoka. In that epic there was included a philosophico-poetical episode with a pantheistic leaning which was the old and genuine form of the present Gītā. This episode was, according to Holzmann, Brahmanized and turned into a Viṣṇuite scripture at a later time, when the Brahmins found it necessary to unite the popular religion with the pantheism of the Gītā in order to check the progress of Buddhism. Without committing ourselves to any judgment on the merits or otherwise of the views of Hopkins and Holzmann as to the original form of the Mahābhārata, we may concede at once that as regards the relation between the Mahābhārata and the Gītā there is an element of truth in the views of both the scholars, though each has overlooked the point which the other has brought into prominence. I agree with Hopkins, for reasons stated in the sequel, that the Gītā originally existed as an absolutely independent work and was later on added to the Mahābhārata. I admit with Holzmann, on the other hand, that in the original Mahābhārata, be its form what it might, there was a chapter, the subject-matter of which corresponded to the contents of the present Gītā. It is not inconceivable, as Holzmann suggests, that a great poet should have taken advantage of the fatal combat between two parties connected by ties of blood and friendship, and used his poetical skill by planning a dialogue over the immortality of the soul, the duty of Kṣātriyas and the like, on the pretext of encouraging the hero of the Epic. But this dialogue could not have been the original of the Bhagavad-Gītā because a great poet would have seen the inappropriateness of time and place

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for a long philosophical discussion on the nature of God and His relation to the world and soul, the three-fold classification of all things and the like.

88. It is, however, not merely Western scholars like Hopkins and Holzmann who have entertained serious doubts as to the genuineness of the present Mahābhārata. The ancient Indian tradition and Hindu scholars of modern India are not without their witnesses on the fact that the Epic in its present form is not just the same work as it left the hands of its author, be he Vedavyāsa, also named Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana or someone else. There seems to be a unanimity among competent critics on the point that the great Epic has received from time to time copious interpolations from foreign sources. As early as the twelfth century A.D. one of the greatest scholars of mediæval India, Mādhavāchāryya, who wrote a valuable critique of the great Epic under the name of 'Tātparyya Nirṇaya,' said with regard to the sacred books written by Vyāsa and other Ṛṣis (including the Mahābhārata in particular): "In some places we find interpolations, in other cases texts are altogether lost, in some other they have changed the character of the text by mistake or on purpose. Even those that might be said to be extant are in a state of utter confusion, mostly they are lost. A millionth part of the genuine texts is not available" (*vide* Subbā Rāo's Mahābhārata Index).

89. Even Mr. Subbā Rāo, who has, in his preface to the Mahābhārata Index, betrayed an undue bias towards the orthodox view of the sanctity and the genuineness of the present Mahābhārata, has not altogether escaped the influence of modern criticism initiated by Western scholars, as he has been compelled to make considerable concession to the spirit of rationalism and to confess that there have been a number of later additions, foreign interpolations, errors and corruptions in the present Epic. Thus he says: (a) The epic was great when genuine, and it is great even now when it is admittedly corrupt in many respects. (b) Notwithstanding the fact that there has always been some safeguarding of the texts in the various centres of learning, it may be granted that errors might have crept in as an effect of both the uncurbed imagination of the intelligent reader and the ignorance of the illiterate scribe; also errors occur which are due to careless transcriptions or to the difficulties in deciphering the original. (c) The work has suffered most at the hands of the people who at different times sought to

introduce new matter or changes with some definite purpose of their own, e.g., the presence of later and even heterodoxical ideas and the foreign colouration to the older work may be due to the Buddhistic teachers changing the character of purely Brahmanical literature. (d) Taking this view we might see how foreign matter and later topics have to some extent found their way into the work and seem to defeat the main purpose of the author. (e) After describing how Vedic learning suffered badly as a result of unceasing internecine war, this learned editor of the Mahābhārata Index tells us, "No wonder that in considerable portions the existing Mahābhārata should not appear a complete and even faithful exposition of ancient wisdom." But as is natural for one who has an instinctive or inherited belief in the sacred, revealed and infallible character of every ancient scripture of the Hindus, Mr. Subbā Ráo adds, "The one consolation is that notwithstanding the serious interference, the spirit of that true Vedic wisdom is unmistakably the prevailing force, which an orthodox thinker could convey by a popular simile, 'The Ganges with all its adulterations is still the holy Ganges.'" (f) "It is not unlikely that the Ākhyānas or any particular passages were directly extracted into the work from still older products which are lost, and this is borne out by the extracts which are traced to the existing Sanhitās and Upaniṣadas." (g) "We do not, however, mean maintaining the genuineness of the present text as a whole, for nearly eight centuries ago Śrī Mādhavāchāryya noted that the work had been so interfered with that a millionth part of the Purāṇic and Itihāsa literature could not be recognized as genuine."

Of course Mr. Ráo does not say whether the discourses of the Gītā might be regarded as specimens of "foreign matter and later topics," which have found their way into the Epic, or whether the Bhagavad-Gītā as a whole was inserted in the body of the Epic by those people "who at different times wanted to introduce new matter or changes with some definite purpose of their own."

90. But we find at least one eminent scholar of Bengal, Bankimchandra Chatterjee, representing the orthodox standpoint and yet maintaining that the Mahābhārata has suffered from successive layers of addition and interpolations from time to time and that the Bhagavad-Gītā belongs to the third stage of the development of the great Epic, when a large number of didactic episodes were inserted into it. In his *Kṛṣṇa Charita* (Part I,



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Chap. XI) Bankimchandra gives expression to his verdict on the interpolations in the Mahābhārata in the following words : " There are three different strata to be discovered in this Mahābhārata. (1) The first is the original skeleton or framework containing nothing but the life-history of the Pāndavas and the incidental story of Kṛṣṇa, which was very concise and formed perhaps the original Bhārata Sanhitā consisting of 24,000 verses. (2) There is a second stratum of a quite different character from the first. While the composition of the first stratum is very sublime, faultless, and highly poetical, the contents of the second stage are of an inferior style, being closely associated with spiritual and metaphysical truths. Poetically speaking, the composition of this stratum is rather of a degenerated style; it is not altogether devoid of poetical merit, but here the poetic skill is displayed only in productive imagination and fictitious creation. These two classes of writings seem to have been composed by two different hands—the former may be regarded as the original and primary, and the latter may be considered to be products of a subsequent age, which were engrafted on the first. For, if the second stratum is removed altogether, there will be no loss to the Mahābhārata, as the history of the Pāndavas remains unbroken; but if the first stratum is taken away, there remains no Mahābhārata at all, or what remains becomes meaningless and disconnected."

But there is a third stratum in the Mahābhārata which took many centuries to develop. Whoever wrote something nice and thought it was well done, inserted the same in the Mahābhārata, which was the fifth Veda, meant for women and men of lower castes, and served as valuable and effective means for mass education. Whatever was worth learning was combined with this most popular work, so that the teaching might be universally appreciated. Thus many things good and bad have crept into the Epic. To Bankimchandra, most parts of Śānti Parva and Anuśāsana Parva, the section called the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in the *Bhīṣma Parva*, Mārkaṇdeya Samasyā section of the Bana Parva, Prajāgar section of the Udyoga Parva and some parts of the Ādiparva appeared to have been composed at the time of compiling this third stratum. Thus Bankimchandra treated the Gītā as a later addition to the original Mahābhārata; we shall however find reasons to differ from Bankimchandra in one respect and maintain that the Gītā had existed as an independent work long before it was inserted in the Epic

and could not therefore have been composed later than the second stage of the Epic as held by Bankimchandra.

91. None of the above-mentioned scholars, however, devoted as much zeal and industry to the study of the Mahábhárata as a whole as Mr. C. V. Vaidya, who has applied the principles of historical criticism to his study with perfect freedom and yet admirable reserve, and has thereby attained most fruitful results. According to Mr. C. V. Vaidya there are three editions of the Mahábhárata representing three different stages in the development of the Epic, so that the work has been handled and rehandled by at least three different hands in three different periods. "The present Mahábhárata," says he, "is as it were a redaction of Vyása's historical poem called 'Jaya' (i.e., Triumph), edited by Vaiśampáyana as Bhárata and reprinted or re-issued by Sauti with notes and additions and with an introduction and a table of contents prefixed to it."<sup>1</sup> As regards the Bhagavad-Gítá, Mr. Vaidya is in doubt whether it was composition of Vyyása or of Vaiśampáyana, but he admits that it is one of those portions of the Mahábhárata, "the language of which looks more ancient than that of others," and that, admitting the Gítá to be a work of Vaiśampáyana, its date, "from the evidence of language must not have been very distant from the date of the Upaniṣads." Thus in conceding that Vyása, the author of the original Epic, might not have composed the Gítá and that probably the Gítá belonged to the Upaniṣadic period, Mr. Vaidya comes very near to the position that we shall seek to establish, viz., *the Gítá was originally an Upaniṣad, which was later on inserted in the Mahábhárata by one of the Editors, be he Vaiśampáyana or someone else.*

"All the floating smaller legends (or Ákhyánas) and historical stories (Itihása) which existed independently of the Bhárata were brought in by Sauti so that they might not be lost or that they might be found together. . . . It does not appear, however, nor is it contended that Ákhyánas and Upákhyánas, thus brought in, were all new inventions of the imagination. On the contrary, it is very probable that they were older national legends which had independent existence in the form of Gáthás, Itihásas, and Puráṇas. They were nevertheless interpolations in the Mahábhárata, that is to say, they did not form part of the original Bhárata of Vaiśampáyana or Vyása."

<sup>1</sup> *The Mahábhárata—A Criticism* (p. 8).

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Again he says: "In fact the Mahābhārata itself states that the Bhārata was in 24,000 verses originally and that Bhārata meant the Mahābhārata without the necessary legends (Upākhyānas). Such a statement can only be explained on the admission that there was a Bhārata of 24,000 slokas, before the Upākhyānas were added by some persons later on." Now what Mr. Vaidya says about smaller legends and historical stories is, in our view, equally true of many of the didactic pieces contained in the Mahābhārata. Some of these were probably *older national* literary assets of highly philosophical and religious value, "which had independent existence" at first and did not form part of the original Bhārata of Vaiśampāyana or Vyāsa. We find reasons to believe that the Bhagavad-Gītā is one of these later additions.

92. Lastly, an orthodox scholar of eminence, like Mr. Tilak, was also compelled to make a distinction between the older and the younger or between the lesser and the greater Epic, and to use such terms as the "original" Mahābhārata and the "original" Gītā, as contrasted with the Mahābhārata and the Gītā in their present forms. Thus he says: "The Bhārata and the Mahābhārata are not the same: the former described the glories of the family of Bhārata, just as the Rāmāyana and the Bhāgavata (Purāṇa) described the life and character of Rāma and Bhagavān (Kṛṣṇa) respectively. In the Mahābhārata itself, the epithet 'Mahat' is explained as connoting 'greatness and weightiness' (swargārohaṇa, Parva V. 44). But the Mahābhārata is really a greater Bhārata as distinguished from a *lesser* Bhārata, which was earlier. The Epic Bhārata was at first made up of 24,000 verses and was called Jai (victory of the Pāndavas?); later on many stories were added to this historical work, and it became 'Mahābhārata,' including history and solution of moral and religious problems."

This view is supported by the Aśwalāyana Gṛhyasūtra, where two different works, Bhārata and Mahābhārata, are mentioned. In course of time, however, the lesser Bhārata became extinct and the people thought that the two Bhārata and Mahābhārata are one and the same work. Vyāsa first taught Bhārata to his son, Śuka, and to his five disciples, viz., Sumanta, Jaimini, Vaiśampāyana, Paila and Śuka, his son. Each of them in his turn composed five different Bhārata Saṁhitās or Mahābhāratas. Of these five works Vyāsa kept only that of Vaiśampāyana and only the chapter

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on Aśwamedhaparva from Jaimini. Thus Tilak agreeing with Vaidya holds the Mahābhārata to be the transformed and final edition enlarged from the original Bhārata.

He, however, admits that it cannot be said whether the Gītā was a part of the original Bhārata or not, and is inclined to think that, like other sections, the present Gītā, too, was written by the author of the Mahābhārata on the basis of the first work and was not composed anew, and he adds, still it cannot be said with certainty that the writer of the Mahābhārata did not make any alterations in the original Gītā.

93. It is clear from the views of several scholars we have quoted above that the presence of the Gītā in the original Epic is at least open to grave doubts, and we shall not be hazarding an entirely novel and absurd undertaking if we discuss the important questions whether the Gītā was originally an independent treatise prior to its insertion in the Epic and if so, in what particular form it existed and why and when it was incorporated into the Mahābhārata. This will be done in Chapter VI, where we shall find reasons to believe that the Gītā was originally an independent Upaniṣadic Text and later on embodied in the Epic Mahābhārata. (Also *vide* Part. III., Ch. III.)

But before entering into that subject, we must remove the formidable barriers that are created against our position by Mr. Tilak's array of arguments in favour of the integral and organic unity of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GĪTĀ VIEWED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ORIGINAL EPIC

#### THE ARGUMENTS OF MR. TILAK REFUTED

##### SECTION I. INSERTION OF THE GĪTĀ IN THE EPIC AS A POETIC NECESSITY—A DEFECTIVE METHOD

94. We have already seen how Mr. Tilak makes a distinction between the original Bhārata and the present Mahābhārata, which he considers to be an enlarged edition of the former. When we press the question as to whether the Gītā formed part of the original Bhārata or was one of the later additions made at the time of compiling the greater 'Mahābhārata,' Mr. Tilak's answer is found to be rather unsatisfactory, because uncertain and even inconsistent. He admits that "it cannot be said whether the Gītā was part of the original Bhārata or not," but at the same time affirms that "it is known that like Sanatsujātiya, Vidūranīti, Śukānupraśna, Yājñavalkya-Janaka-Saṁvāda, Viṣṇu-Sahasranāma, Anugītā, and the Nārāyaṇīya section, the present Gītā, too, was written by the author of the Mahābhārata on the basis of the first work and not composed anew. Still it cannot be said with certainty that the writer of the Mahābhārata did not make any alterations in the original Gītā." Thus even according to Mr. Tilak, it is at least *doubtful* whether the Gītā was originally contained in the Bhārata epic, and it is equally open to discussion whether the present Gītā, as it is contained in the present Mahābhārata, has not been altogether remodelled and transformed by the Editor of the Mahābhārata on the basis of an original Gītā. The orthodox spirit of Mr. Tilak, nevertheless, prevails in the end and he concludes thus : "After due consideration it can be easily conceived that the present Gītā of seven hundred verses is a part of the present Epic and both were composed by the same person and that the present Gītā was not subsequently inserted in the present Epic by another hand."



95. It is to be noted, however, that Mr. Tilak has treated the whole question of the relation of the Gītā to the Great Epic from the poetical point of view and justifies the insertion of the former in the latter as a poetic necessity, without critically examining the historical and genetic aspect of the question at all. For example, he ignores altogether the primary and relevant questions whether the Epic is to be treated as a history recording actual events or as a pure fiction produced by the creative art of the Poet, and whether the lessons of the Gītā were actually taught in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra or the setting of this poem was purely unhistorical, being due to the constructive imagination of a dramatic artist; and yet inconsistently enough he assumes at the outset that the real object of the Gītā was to induce Arjuna to fight and justifies its place in the present Mahābhārata, mainly on that ground. Nor does Tilak undertake an investigation of the far deeper and more significant question as to how far the narrative and didactic parts of the Mahābhārata fit in with each other, and whether the *present Mahābhārata* can be said to be composed by any one single writer or its various episodes and Upākhyānas be referred to the same author and even to the same period of literary history at all. From the critical-historical point of view, Mr. Tilak has proceeded on wrong lines and followed a faulty mode of treatment from the beginning, for instead of settling the preliminary questions as to the authorship of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, their relation to the Upaniṣadic thought and to the Bhāgavata religion, prior to his exposition of the teachings of the Gītā, he has first of all interpreted the philosophy and religion of the Gītā in his own way, dogmatically accepting the traditional and orthodox view of the Gītā as an integral part of the Mahābhārata, and then taken upon himself the task of justifying his assumptions by briefly touching upon these momentous critical-historical problems in an Appendix. This defect or limitation of Mr. Tilak's work on the Gītā has not only vitiated his conclusions but also exposed him to the charges of subjectivity and inconsistency. To take one particular instance, he has missed the true significance and the essential spirit of the teachings of the Gītā by connecting them principally with the local and temporal incident of an historical or imaginary war, as described by the epic poet, and he has unnecessarily narrowed the range of the influence and bearing of this sublime episode by associating it with the Bhāgavata sect; and yet, strangely enough, he insists that the

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Gītā was a code of spiritual culture reconciling the paths of wisdom and action, of Yoga and Bhakti, and as such, a universal non-sectarian guide to all humanity, while repeatedly and emphatically declaring in the same breath that the real object of the Gītā was to influence Arjuna to fight and that its teachings were products of the Bhāgavata movement.

96. Let us now see how he establishes his hypothesis that the present Gītā and the present Mahābhārata are works of the same hand and that the former is an integral part of the latter.

(i) According to Tilak, the justification for uniting the Gītā with the Mahābhārata is to be found in the need for imparting such advice to Arjuna as could induce him to fight.

Now, if the original Gītā and the original Bhārata were composed about five hundred years after the battle of Kurukṣetra had actually taken place, as Tilak would have us believe, the details of the incidents of the war must have been well-nigh forgotten by that time, so that the dialogue of the Gītā could not have been a reproduction of the actual conversations that took place between two historical persons, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, on the eve of the great war. As Tilak himself doubts the authenticity of the present Gītā as a part of the original Bhārata epic, we are justified in regarding the peculiar setting of this Divine Song as an outcome of the poetic imagination of the author or the editor of the Epic, who perhaps wanted to find a moral support for the inhuman atrocities of the war or to utilize the occasion of the exciting scene of war for the communication of certain moral and religious truths with an impressive effect. But if it is once admitted that the setting of the poem is not historical, but only a poetic creation of the dramatic art, we do not see how the object of the Gītā could be represented as inducing Arjuna to fight, as Tilak imagines.

Divested of its historical setting, the teaching of the Gītā seems to be directed rather to the general end of inducing any hero to face the moral struggles in the inner republic, or of enabling any human soul to fight the battles of life, and this mode of spiritual interpretation would extend the teachings of the Gītā to all times and all places. On Tilak's own admission, the Gītā is a text-book of spiritual education as it aims at establishing on the basis of the Vedānta that *Karma-yoga* (the path of action combined with devotion) is better than *Sannyāsa* (the path of renunciation), that *Buddhi* (reason) is the primary factor in Karmayoga and that

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salvation is therefore attainable only by performing all duties according to *Swadharma* (one's own true nature or station in life), keeping reason in equilibrium through the knowledge of the unity of Brahman and Átman and through devotion to God. In another place Tilak tells us that the chief object of the Gítá was to give full support to Karmayoga, according to the scriptures, reconciling Bhakti (devotion full of faith), especially disinterested action, with the knowledge of Brahman as contained in the Upaniṣads and with the doctrine of the eternal and the non-eternal principle as contained in the Sāṅkhya system of Kapila. In the light of this fundamental conception of the end of the Gítá, all its epic associations recede in the background, the relation of its teachings to a particular historical event occupies a subordinate position, and the main theme of the poem appears in its true perspective, as the promotion of spiritual culture, and not the unworthy end of inducing Arjuna to fight. From this point of view, we may question Tilak's right to treat the Gítá as an integral part of the Epic, and rather claim the former as an independent religio-philosophical work appropriated by the author or the editor of the latter.

97. (ii) Mr. Tilak finds a poetic justification for the insertion of the Gítá in the Mahábhárata in the fact that as there are similar discourses in other parts of the present Epic, the fundamental principles had to be formulated somewhere. Hence arose the Gítá as a system of right and wrong in the sphere of practical life.

But this statement of Tilak is rather wide of the mark. It is impossible to find in the Gítá the fundamental ethical principles underlying all the incidents and actions connected with all the heroic characters in the Epic or a summary of the moral and religious instructions contained in the large varieties of other discourses in the Epic. There is not only no common bond or thread running through all these discourses, but it is not often possible to reconcile the teachings of the one with those of the other. Nor does the Gítá profess to formulate the fundamental principles for all other parts of the didactic epic, any more than these latter refer to the Gítá as containing the supreme standard of moral judgment.

98. (iii) Again, another poetic justification for the Gítá is found by Mr. Tilak in the fact that as Vyása had composed the Epic to describe the golden deeds of Kṛṣṇa and Pándavas, the questions naturally arise whether these great men had characters which should be accepted as the ideal of man's conduct, whether the duties of the

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world are to be performed or not, and if so, how to do them so as to get salvation. These questions had to be determined somewhere. Hence the necessity of the Gītā. But this poem would have been a minor episode and its importance would have been diminished if it had been combined with the mixture of many lessons in Banaparva, Sántiparva, etc. Its position in the *Udyogaparva* is therefore indispensable from the moral point of view. Thus even from the standpoint of poetry, says Tilak, the insertion of the Gītā is appropriate.

Here, too, Mr. Tilak's explanation is not at all convincing, but bears the trace of a subjective character. First of all, the Gītā does not afford a justification for war and gambling nor does it white-wash all the defects and foibles that may be found in the character of the great men mentioned in the Epic—nay, it does not at all refer to any personal traits or anecdotes even in the life of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna themselves, whose names are so intimately associated with the episode. From the moral and poetic point of view, other episodes in the Sántiparva and Banaparva are equally justifiable and the teachings of the Gītā would have been equally appropriate, if they were placed anywhere at the end of the great war and altogether dissociated from the momentary weakness of Arjuna. No moral justification of the war was necessary when the war had been already decided upon and when the armies actually met in the field. It might have been indispensable when the war was about to be decided upon; or the Gītā might have been inserted with a different setting as a reply to Gándhārī's reproaches on Kṛṣṇa in the Strī-parva just as similar episodes like the Mokṣadharmā, Anugītā, Sanatsujātiya, and other didactic pieces have been incorporated in the Epic. If the Gītā is a product of the Bhāgavata religion and is meant to glorify Śrīkṛṣṇa, as Tilak maintains, it could be with far greater propriety inserted in the Harivaṁśa, or for the matter of that, in any of the Purāṇas supposed to be composed by Vyāsa and associated with the Bhāgavata religion.

Then, the questions as to how the duties of the world are to be performed and how one could attain salvation, have been abundantly dealt with not only in the Upaniṣads and in most of the Purāṇas, but also in other chapters of the Great Epic; and there was no need of a separate section being devoted to these topics in the Udyogaparva.

99. (iv) Mr. Tilak seems to have realized the force of all these



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probable objections to his hypothesis, but he has summarily dismissed them all as irrelevant. Why are the Gītā doctrines taught in the battlefield? Is that text a later insertion? Are there interpolations in it? All these questions are considered by him to be irrelevant or silenced by his resort to the distinction between the *Bhārata* and the *Mahābhārata*. As Vyāsa, the editor of the *Mahābhārata*, drew his materials from the original Epic *Bhārata*, Mr. Tilak would have us imagine that in his editorial capacity Vyāsa not only added to the latter work much of his own composition, but may have incorporated into it a vast mass of existing didactic materials from other sources. In that case some plausibility may be given to Mr. Tilak's opinion that to turn the *Bhārata* into the *Mahābhārata* and for determining the right and the duty, such and such subjects had to be placed in such and such positions and on such and such occasions, and the author did not care how much space was occupied by each topic. Mr. Tilak's conclusion would then have at least an appearance of reasonableness, viz., in order to justify the character of Kṛṣṇa and other great personalities, the Gītā with Karmayoga as its chief feature has been inserted in the right place and for adequate reasons and hence the Gītā is a genuine part of the *Mahābhārata*.

100. When, however, we consider the question a little more closely, this view of Tilak will appear to be highly inconsistent. He speaks of the Gītā as a part of the original *Bhārata* and says that Vyāsa did not compose the *Bhagavad-Gītā* anew but found the work already existing and only made slight alterations here and there. And yet he justifies the position of the Gītā in the present *Mahābhārata* saying that it has been inserted in the right place and on the right occasion when the *Bhārata* was made into the *Mahābhārata*, implying thereby that the Gītā was no part of the original *Bhārata* but only a later addition made by the Editor of the later but larger *Mahābhārata*.

101. Moreover, if Mr. Tilak considered that at the time of editing the present *Mahābhārata*, certain didactic materials (like the Gītā) had somehow to be fitted in with the story by the Editor, who took special care to insert the right thing in the right place, was he not favouring the theory of copious interpolations in the *Mahābhārata* and thereby setting aside the views of many orthodox scholars who insist on retaining all the narrative events and didactic episodes as genuine parts of the Epic, on the ground of their being intimately



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connected with its great theme and blending into a consistent unitary whole? In offering this mode of justification, is not Mr. Tilak indirectly supporting our conclusion that the Gītā was originally an independent treatise and was incorporated into the Mahābhārata by a later editor of the Epic? For, if a considerable mass of materials were subsequently added to the Bhārata of 24,000 verses to make of it the Mahābhārata of 100,000 verses, it follows as an inevitable corollary that the didactic episodes like the Gītā, the Nārāyaṇīya section and the Anugītā must have been inserted as parts of these later additions.

Once we take the Gītā to be an independent treatise, not connected with the original Mahābhārata, the question whether the insertion of 18 chapters and 700 verses of the present Gītā was at all justifiable from the point of view of poetic harmony or symmetry or sense of proportion, does not arise at all. Moreover, if Mr. Tilak has failed after taking so much pains to convince us of the truth of his theory that the place given to the Gītā in the present Mahābhārata has been poetically most appropriate, how more difficult must be the task of proving that the Gītā formed a part of the original Bhārata and that it was assigned there a right place on the right occasion. In any case, if the present Mahābhārata has been enlarged out of a smaller Bhārata, Mr. Tilak will have to admit that the present Gītā, too, must have been an enlarged edition of a smaller Gītā. As in our view the Gītā bears a perfectly universal and eternal significance, it needs no association with the Bhārata story or Bhāgavata religion, in spite of its poetical setting as a dialogue between two epic heroes, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna. And this view of the Gītā as originally independent of the Epic Bhārata and having the character of an Upaniṣad, which was later on inserted in the Epic by the Editor of the Mahābhārata, is certainly less objectionable, more reasonable and more in accord with facts than the assumption of Mr. Tilak's.

### SECTION II. INTERNAL EVIDENCES EXAMINED

#### (REFERENCES IN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA ITSELF)

102. Let us now consider in detail the internal evidences adduced by Mr. Tilak from the body of the Mahābhārata itself in support of his theory that the Gītā has always been an integral part of the

Epic, as it is to-day. It is to be noted that no one questions the fact of the Gītā being a part of the present Mahābhārata.

If any doubt is expressed as to its genuine relation with the Mahābhārata, it is on the ground that the Gītā is regarded by some competent scholars as having been an independent work, probably an old Upaniṣad in its original form, and also on the ground that according to a large circle of eminent critics (including Mr. Tilak himself), the Mahābhārata in its present form was preceded by an earlier and smaller Epic, which was the original data out of which the present Great Epic has been formed, this earlier "Bhārata" being free from much of the didactic overgrowth, including the Bhagavad-Gītā and such other episodes, that is found in the present Mahābhārata. In solving this problem, therefore, any references to the Gītā contained in the present Mahābhārata will not help us much beyond proving what is already accepted as an indisputable fact, viz., that the Gītā is a part of the present Mahābhārata. But it may be possible for a discerning reader to find significant clues as to the relation of the Gītā to other parts of the Mahābhārata by a careful examination of the various references to the Gītā in the present Mahābhārata. To this end a review of Mr. Tilak's facts and evidences will be very helpful.

103. (a) That the Gītā is a part of the Mahābhārata is mentioned in the Ādiparva three times, in the Sāntiparva three times and again in the Aśwamedhaparva (Anugītā).

Now as to the first of these, the Ādiparva, which is more or less an Introduction, and includes a sort of index to the whole Epic, Mr. C. V. Vaidya has discovered in it three stages of the development of the Mahābhārata in the hands of Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Sauti, and even precisely determined the beginning of these three layers with the words "Āstika," "Manu" and "Uparichara." According to Hopkins, the Ādiparva is a later addition to the original Epic. Any references to the Gītā in the Ādiparva are therefore vitiated by the suspicion of being later interpolations, and only prove, if they can prove anything at all, that the Gītā was already a part of the Mahābhārata when these particular verses in the Ādiparva referring to the Gītā were composed.

104. As to the references in the Sāntiparva, do they not rather prove that the Gītā had an older origin or at least that it was inserted in the Mahābhārata *earlier* than these sections of the Sāntiparva? As Dr. Bhāndārkar, Brajendranath Seal, Bankimchandra, Vaidya,

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Dahlmann, and Hopkins are all agreed as to the fact that the didactic pieces of Śāntiparva were originally independent treatises and later on inserted in the Epic, the references to the Gītā contained in them may be construed to mean that the Gītā, too, was originally an independent work, or that the references to the Gītā were interpolated in these sections of the Śāntiparva when the latter were incorporated into the Epic. It is, however, significant that all these references to the Gītā are found in those particular sections of the Śāntiparva which are entitled Nārāyaṇīya section, and the doctrines taught in the latter are said to have been previously communicated to Arjuna by Kṛṣṇa (the Lord) himself on the eve of the great war. We shall compare the teachings of the Gītā with those of the Nārāyaṇīya section in the Śāntiparva and see that besides broad similarities of principles, there are important differences in details which can only be explained by referring them to different stages of development in the history of philosophical and religious thought. We shall then find that the presence of certain fundamental features in the one and the absence of the same in the other, especially the predominantly Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava stamp in the Nārāyaṇīya section, as distinguished from the universalistic and liberal teachings of the Gītā, can only be accounted for by taking the one to be an earlier and the other to be a later product. As the Gītā does not refer to the Nārāyaṇīya doctrines, while the latter refers to the Gītā, it follows that the Gītā is the earlier of the two. Nay, we shall be constrained to go further and say that the verses referring to the Gītā were added later on to the Nārāyaṇīya section by the Editor of the Mahābhārata at the time of the rehandling of the didactic pieces of the Śāntiparva just in the same manner as the verse referring to the Brahmasūtras in the Gītā (XIII. 5) was according to Tilak composed by Vyāsa, the editor of the Mahābhārata, and added to the remodelled Gītā.

105. As to the references in the Anugītā, not only does its very name indicate that it is an imitation of the Bhagavad-Gītā, but the poet or the editor who composed the Anugītā expressly mentions and indirectly betrays his indebtedness to the Gītā. For according to the setting of the Anugītā, when Kṛṣṇa is about to leave for his own land (Dwārakā) at the end of the Kuru-Pāṇḍava war, Arjuna requests his friend to repeat the lessons which were imparted by him to Arjuna in the beginning of the war. Kṛṣṇa scolds Arjuna for his bad memory and himself pleads guilty of

having forgotten all about it, as he communicated the truths of the Bhagavad-Gītā in a state of *yoga*. However, he pretends to convey the substance of the previous doctrines of the Gītā in a new form through the story of a Brāhmaṇa. There is, however, very little similarity between the teachings of the Gītā and those of this episode, which is also called Brāhmaṇa-Gītā.

106. It is interesting to note that the Anugītā is immediately succeeded by a much inferior imitation of Viśvarūpa or the revelation of the Divine Form (now styled Vaiṣṇava-rupa), showing that it was composed with other wild growth of Purāṇic legends after Kṛṣṇa had been elevated to the rank of God or recognized as an incarnation of God, and at the time when the Gītā, too, was made a Vaiṣṇava scripture. Anugītā might be a title given to this work in jest by a Brahminical opponent of Vaiṣṇavism, who wanted to bring into ridicule the theory of Kṛṣṇa's divine birth, by showing that he was no more than an ordinary mortal who forgot all about his teachings in the Gītā as soon as the war was finished, because there was no longer any motive for inducing the hero Arjuna to that ghastly undertaking. If Kṛṣṇa confesses that he was *yogastha* (in a state of perfect unison with God or mystic ecstasy and inspiration) at the time of preaching the Gītā, it only shows that he is at present *yogabhraṣṭa*, i.e., fallen from the height of his divine vision, implying that he was just like other men, subject to periodical lapses of memory or downward fall, and therefore not fit to be ranked as an incarnation. The same impression is confirmed by the fact that Kṛṣṇa is shortly afterwards made to reveal the cosmic form against his will, out of fear of Utaṅka's curse, as if the display of the Divine Form were a mere fun, and could be made to order like a pantomimic show before anybody and everybody. Moreover, it is inconceivable how this revelation of Divine Form to the sage Utaṅka could be made by Kṛṣṇa, who on his own confession is now fallen from *Yoga*. If any proofs for interpolation in the Mahābhārata were needed, it is to be found here in the Anugītā, both in its setting and in its contents, and in the story of Utaṅka meeting Kṛṣṇa on his way to Dwārakā.

107. It is therefore not to be wondered at that so many scholars of India like Bankimchandra, Telang, Bhāndārkar and Vaidya consider the whole of this section of the Mahābhārata to be a later interpolation, and even Tilak himself found in the Anugītā only a poor and imperfect imitation of the sublime Divine Song by an



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inferior hand. According to some of these competent critics there must have been an interval of several centuries between the Gítá and the Anugítá. According to Dr. Bhándárkar the process of Kṛṣṇa's gradual elevation to the Divine rank and the spread of his religion from the Sāttvata district of Mathurá to the wider regions is represented by the interval between the Gítá and the Anugítá. We shall discuss this question more fully when we treat of the relation between the Gítá and the Bhágavata religion, and determine the age of the Gítá. Thus the reference to the Gítá in the Anugítá, rather than proving that the Gítá is an original part of the Mahábhárata, shows that the Gítá belongs to a much earlier stage of the Epic than the Anugítá, and that both were probably later interpolations. The priority of the Gítá in date runs parallel to its priority in the context of the Epic.

108. Those who consider that the Gítá is not a genuine part of the Mahábhárata naturally regard these passages in the Mahábhárata which refer to the Gítá as later interpolations. According to Mr. Tilak's mistaken diagnosis, it is the erroneous belief as to the Gítá being based mainly on the *Brahmajñāna* (knowledge concerning Brahma) of the Upaniṣad, with wisdom and renunciation as its principal features, that leads people to suspect that it may not be an integral part of the Epic. But in our case at any rate this erroneous belief does not exist, as we take the Gítá to be a text-book of universal liberal and catholic religion reconciling wisdom with action and devotion. If we still hold the Gítá to be a later insertion in the Epic it is on quite different grounds. On the contrary, one may equally well maintain that it is because people erroneously think that the Gítá is a Bhágavata text based on the Kṛṣṇa cult and that the Epic Bhárata was meant to glorify this Divine incarnation of Kṛṣṇa, that they ascribe to the Gítá a Bhágavata origin and treat it as an integral part of the Epic, ignoring the Upaniṣadic origin and Vedántic character of the Bhagavad-Gítá. This view of ours will be supported by facts and arguments as we proceed.

109. But we may also confirm our position by simply drawing the attention of our readers to the fact that no break or gap occurs in the Epic story, if the Gítá episode is removed from it, as the Gítá may be read and understood alone, apart from any reference to the Mahábhárata war, although the beginning of the poem has an epic setting and it has two heroes of the Epic as the principal speakers in the dialogue. If we take away these poetic associations



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of the Gîtā, nothing unusual or strange happens to the substance of its teachings, and we find no difficulty in explaining them, while on the other hand those who associate the Gîtā with the Epic war, and put on its teachings a Vaiṣṇava interpretation, not only narrow the scope of its influence and the range of its application by local, temporal and sectarian limitations, but also introduce unnecessary complications and do violence to the spirit of its teachings.

110. Still another proof of the independent character of the Gîtā may be found in the fact that a very large number of editions of the Gîtā have been printed and published separately in India and elsewhere without creating any difficulty in the way of its popularity owing to its dissociation from the Epic. But a scholar of the eminence of Mr. Tilak is not to be easily moved by such considerations. He arms himself against all future critics and opponents of his views by showing that the Gîtā so closely resembles other parts of the Mahābhārata in *thought* as well as in *language* that it cannot but be regarded as an integral part of the latter. Let us now examine the validity of these arguments.

### SECTION III. SIMILARITY OF LANGUAGE BETWEEN THE MAHĀBHĀRATA AND THE GÎTĀ

111. (i) Mr. Tilak agrees with Telang in holding that the language, metre and composition of the Gîtā prove its antiquity. The Gîtā was composed at a time when Ārṣa vṛtta was in vogue. In other parts of the Mahābhārata, too, such Ārṣa vṛttas or Vedic metres are found. Hence, he concludes, the Gîtā must be regarded as an original part of the Mahābhārata. But the utmost that can be proved from these data is that the Gîtā and the Mahābhārata are both of an early origin and belong to the same age, and not that the Gîtā is a part of the original Epic.

112. (ii) Then, again, Mr. Tilak quotes a number of verses—in fact twenty-seven full verses and twelve half-verses—which are common in both the works. When, however, we examine these verses, we discover that out of them nine full verses and two half-verses belong to the first chapter of the Gîtā, which is really a part of the Mahābhārata and which must have been, as Garbe says, altered to a large extent by the interpolator in order to fit the inserted episode to its new surroundings. Again nine verses and six half-verses in the Gîtā agree with those in the Śāntiparva of the

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Mahābhārata, which itself is admitted to be an interpolated text almost unanimously by all scholars. A number of other verses and half-verses of the Gītā occur in didactic parts of the Mahābhārata and deal with moral and religious truths which cannot prove with certainty the integrity of the Gītā as an original part of the Mahābhārata. For example, the episodes Viduranīti and Sanatsujātiya of the Udyogaparva, Brāhmaṇa-Vyādhasaṁvāda and Mārkaṇḍeyaparva in the Banaparva, Anugītā in the Aswamedhaparva and even Strīparva contain a few verses or half-verses that are common with the Gītā. Now these verses may have been originally the common property of all the authors of that age or were probably what Telang calls floating verses, which were later on appropriated by different treatises. As we are inclined to believe that the Mahābhārata received successive layers of didactic pieces from time to time and that the Gītā was one of the earliest works to be incorporated into the Epic, we may equally well maintain that the Gītā contains the originals of these verses while the other episodes borrowed them from the Gītā.

113 Mr. Tilak himself has noticed that some of these verses found in the Gītā and in other parts of the Mahābhārata are really taken from the Upaniṣads and belong thus to the common stock of Vedic literature and treatises. It is strange that in spite of these apparent explanations Tilak attempts to base his hypothesis that the Gītā is a part of the Mahābhārata on the unity of language, as shown by these verses.

Now there are no doubt one or two verses in the Gītā which also occur in the Karna-parva and Bhīṣma-parva. These verses, too, are concerned with moral lessons, but they cannot be explained by reference to the Upaniṣads or other old pieces. It must be confessed, however, that a few verses of this type cannot make up a sufficiently strong case to prove the Gītā to be an integral part of the Mahābhārata. Moreover, certain verses become current common ways of expressing proverbial wisdom, as we know from the literature of our own country and our own age. Certain peculiar words, phrases or lines of Rabindranāth's stories or poems, for example, have been assimilated and appropriated by most Bengali writers, but that does not justify us in holding that all those works in which we find such words, phrases, or lines occurring must be products of Rabindranāth himself. This line of reasoning would take away from beneath the feet of Tilak the ground on which he

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establishes his theory that the Gītā and the Mahābhārata are works of the same author, and that the former has always been a part of the latter.

114. (iii) According to Tilak some verses of the Manusmṛhitā have been quoted in the Mahābhārata and in the Gītā; for example, G. VIII. 17, III. 35 (half-verse), XVIII. 47 (half-verse), II. 29 (half) are with slight changes just the same as Manu I. 73, X. 97, XII. 91. As the Manusmṛhitā is referred to in the Anuśāsanaparva, 47, 35 of the Mahābhārata (Manusmṛhitām Śāstram), Tilak naturally concludes that the common author of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata is indebted to the writer of the Manusmṛhitā, forgetting that there are not merely two alternatives, of Manu quoting from the Gītā, and the Gītā quoting from Manu, but a third possible alternative (as noted by Garbe) which is more reasonable, viz., that both the Gītā and Manu quoted these verses from an older authority belonging probably to the Upaniṣadic circle. In fact, Mr. Telang has held on other independent grounds that the Gītā was the product of a much earlier period of thought than the Manusmṛhitā. We are not only perfectly at one with Telang on this point, but also maintain that the Gītā is older than many of the didactic episodes of the Mahābhārata, including the Anuśāsanaparva, which contains the verses referring to Manu. Apparently the editors of the present Mahābhārata have not only freely drawn from Manu and other authorities, but also absorbed within the Great Epic a large number of older works like the Bhagavad-Gītā and Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mokṣadharmā episode.

115. (iv) Lastly, Tilak strengthens his proof in favour of the similarity of language between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata by reference to the fact that the description of *Bibhātis* or Divine manifestations in the tenth chapter of the Gītā has its parallel in the Anuśāsanaparva (14, 311-321) and in the Anugītā (43, 44). It is to be noted that Mr. Tilak himself admits that the Gītā passages are much finer and must have formed the original model which the later writers imitated, and this is abundantly proved by the delineation of these Divine glories in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Now, nothing could be more subversive of the position of the orthodox scholars like Tilak who believe the Gītā to be an integral part of the original Epic than these references, and yet nothing could supply us with stronger evidence of interpolations in the Epic than these. It is inconceivable that the author of the Epic, had he composed

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these passages under consideration, would repeat the same subject in three different places in one and the same work, and strangely enough in a manner that on each subsequent occasion the description of these pieces would be much feebler and poorer in the qualities of language and style than on the first. What could be more reasonable than to assume that the pieces were touched by different hands, and that the first of them, viz., the Bhagavad-Gītā, which is admittedly the finest and sublimest of them all, was the original, of which the second and third descriptions are mere imitation copies? As we have said before, the name of the Anugītā itself indicates and pre-supposes the existence of the Gītā as an original and independent work and it is from this Divine song, too, that various attempts at describing the revelation of the Universal form of God to man emanated. It follows then that the original Gītā as an Upaniṣad was the fountain-head of inspirations for many minor poets, and that later editors of the Mahābhārata not only appropriated this Upaniṣadic Gītā for their sectarian ends, but also introduced interpolations and additions in other parts of the Epic in imitation of those passages in the Gītā which struck them as most original and at the same time as beautiful and impressive. Hopkins, as we shall see, considers the Gītā to be linguistically and stylistically more antique than other parts of the Mahābhārata.

### SECTION IV. SIMILARITY OF THOUGHT BETWEEN THE GĪTĀ AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

116. Now let us consider Mr. Tilak's evidence based on the similarity of thought between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata. Before examining in detail the various points of similarity shown by Tilak under this head, it is to be remarked that some amount of agreement in thought there is bound to be between the Gītā and the Great Epic, as after all both of them owe their origin to the same stream of Vedic thought and therefore breathe to some extent in the same intellectual atmosphere, created by the antecedent ritualistic literature of the Brāhmaṇas and elevated and purified by the social and religious ideal of the Upaniṣads. Both of them must have been influenced by the lives and examples of the saintly Ṛṣis and warrior-kings as recorded in the earlier scriptures of ancient India. But at the same time it must not be overlooked that the various didactic parts of the present Mahābhārata represent very

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different strata of thought belonging to different periods of history which were widely remote from one another.

117. A careful student of the Mahābhārata will recognize that all the various episodes of the present Mahābhārata are not products of the same pen, nor even of the same age, as the philosophical thoughts in some are more advanced than those in the other. Some of the episodes refer to the incidents which occurred at an earlier age than those mentioned in the other episodes. Some treatises found in the Epic contain concepts which must have originated and developed in later times and which are therefore absent in such other parts of the Epic as were distinctly composed at an earlier date. What is more remarkable, some of the didactic episodes like the Nārāyaṇīya section expressly mention that the original sources of the doctrines propounded in them are to be found in older treatises like the Gītā, although these latter, too, form at present parts of the Mahābhārata Epic. In some parts of the Epic are to be found sectarian religions and philosophical schools holding a prominent position, while in other parts, like the Bhagavad-Gītā, we have a system of religious culture which is entirely non-sectarian and groups of philosophical concepts which belong to the pre-systematic period. If some parts of the Epic are pre-Buddhistic, other parts are decidedly post-Buddhistic and even post-Christian, containing hints or references to themes or concepts that could not be reconciled with those of an earlier age.<sup>1</sup>

118. A comparison between the Gītā on the one hand and the Sanatsujātiya, the Anugītā and the Mokṣadharma episodes on the other will convince one of the truth of these remarks, and scholars of the eminence of Mr. Telang and Dr. Bhāndārkar have therefore rightly assigned them to different periods of history separated by wide intervals of time as well as thought. Even Mr. Tilak himself noticed that in spite of apparent similarities of thought between the Gītā and other parts of the Mahābhārata, there are points of difference which are equally important. For example, if the author of the Gītā is the same as that of the Nārāyaṇīya, one cannot

<sup>1</sup> Dr. B. N. Seal holds that Bhāgavata doctrines as presented in the Nārāyaṇīya sections, were influenced by Christian thought, although according to Prof. H. P. Sāstri's view Siva or Mahādeva was a non-Vedic God introduced in India about 600 B.C., while Kṛṣṇa, who is supposed to be the founder of the Bhāgavata religion, is referred to in the Vedic literature and belongs to the earliest period of Indian history. Again in the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsanaparva) Kṛṣṇa is said to have on a particular occasion, worshipped Mahādeva.



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explain why there should be present in the latter and absent in the former such important doctrines as those of the four Vyūhas, or divine forms, or of the six or ten incarnations, etc., which indicate not only a difference of opinion, but a variation of thought, arising out of the different stages or strata in the development of philosophical and religious ideas represented therein. We shall have occasions to compare the Kṛṣṇaite elements of the Mahābhārata and the teachings of the Gîtâ in the next chapter and to notice the differences that separate the two with a special reference to the relation between the Gîtâ and the Nārāyaṇīya. At present we need simply dwell on such topics in the Gîtâ and the Mahābhārata, the resemblances of which with one another are supposed to prove their common origin and common authorship.

119. (i) Similarity of the doctrine of knowledge concerning Brahma in such episodes of the Epic as Sanatsujātiya, the Śukānu-praśna, Yājñavalkya-Janaka Saṁvāda, Anugîtâ, etc., with the Vedāntic elements or idealistic doctrines of the Gîtâ, is, according to Tilak, a clear proof of their common authorship. But can we not explain this fact of similarity more satisfactorily by tracing these doctrines to their common fountain-head, viz., the older Upaniṣads? As we have already said, some of these were originally independent treatises like the Gîtâ, and later on incorporated into the Mahābhārata, while one of them in any case (viz., Anugîtâ) is an imitation of the Gîtâ itself. The ideas in which they agree are but the common heritage of their authors from the Ṛṣiṣ of the Upaniṣads, and this agreement no more proves the unity of their authorship or the genuineness of their relation to the original Epic than the points of similarity among the various older Upaniṣads can establish their common origin as products of the same individual mind or as sections of one and the same work.

120. (ii) Another point of agreement between the Gîtâ and the Mahābhārata is found by Tilak in their attitude towards the Sāṅkhya doctrines, for while the Gîtâ accepts the Sāṅkhya doctrines of twenty-four principles and the gradation of Guṇas, it maintains at the same time an eternal principle which is above Puruṣa and Prakṛti. And this is exactly the view held in other parts of the Mahābhārata, e.g., Śāntiparva speaks of a twenty-sixth principle beyond the twenty-five principles recognized by the Sāṅkhya.

Here too, Tilak ignores the facts that the so-called Sāṅkhya ideas are found scattered in the various classical Upaniṣads and

were common properties of all thinkers and writers during the Epic age, that the Epic Sāṅkhya had a theistic form and preceded the classical Sāṅkhya with its non-theistic form, and that the Gītā, as well as many other episodes of the Epic, was composed during the period of transition from the Upaniṣadic thought to the systematic schools of Indian philosophy.

121. (iii) Ideas with regard to the description of armies, the grief of heroes and the scenes of lamentation are found in the Gītā and other parts of the Mahābhārata. But as it is only in the first chapter of the Gītā that such ideas occur and as we have found reasons to believe that this chapter is probably a part of the original Mahābhārata and is at least re-written to adapt the inserted Gītā to the epic context, the presence of such thoughts in the Gītā and the Mahābhārata cannot be employed as a proof of the textual unity of the two works.

122. (iv) Then Mr. Tilak lays emphasis on the similarity of ideas between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata as regards the following points, viz., contrast between the Sāṅkhya and Karmayoga, between *Akarma* and Karma (inaction and action), the non-attachment of sins in works done according to one's *Swadharma* (duty arising out of one's station in life), the account of creation, the description of the sitting posture of students who practise yoga, the doctrines of Guṇas and the ideal of equanimity. But he forgets that the Epic age is not a closed circuit confined to a brief period of time, but covers long centuries of diverse religious, moral and philosophical ideas prevailing in the atmosphere of the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic times as well as in later periods, so that there is bound to be some similarity in these respects between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata as between the Gītā and the Upaniṣads. This is true of the religion of the Śruti and Smṛti concerning sacrifices which were conceived to have been created by Brahma along with other creatures, a conception which occurs in the Gītā owing to its Upaniṣadic origin. It is however to be noted that in spite of these similarities pointed out by Tilak, the thoughts of the Gītā are purer, sublimer and more refined and less elaborate, and they bear traces of a more idealistic and rationalistic spirit than those of other episodes of the Mahābhārata on the whole, while one can discover in the latter a more complex and systematic mode of presentation of the same ideas, developed perhaps in a highly elaborated form and with realistic exaggerations which are un-

mistakable signs of a later origin. A comparison between the ideas relating to the institutions of caste and Āśramas, and those relating to the Sāṅkhya view of cosmogony or creation, as well as to the practice of yoga contained in the Gītā and in the Epic, will convince one that the ideas of the former belong to an earlier age and remind us of the intellectual atmosphere of the Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads, while those of the latter are distinctly products of later systematic speculations. The undue bias and partiality of Mr. Tilak will be apparent when we observe that the concepts of *Devayāna* and *Pitryāna* (two paths of departed spirits), of Adhibhūtic, Adhidaivic and Ādhyātmic, or truths relating to the Elements (material), the supernatural and the spiritual, and the virtues of behaving towards others as one would behave towards his own self and beneficence for all creatures, which are common properties of the Gītā and other episodes of the Mahābhārata in virtue of their heritage of the Upaniṣadic thoughts, are accepted by this eminent scholar as evidences in support of his contention that the Gītā is an integral part of the Epic text. A critical and rational study of these works would enable us to discover the presence of similar concepts in the Vedic and pre-Epic literature, and would also show us the line along which the moral, philosophical and religious ideas contained in them had historically developed. Such a study would point unmistakably towards the conclusion that the Gītā represents a higher and earlier strata of thought and follows more closely therefore in the wake of the Upaniṣadic speculations than the rest of the didactic and Epic Mahābhārata.

123. (v) Tilak also finds in the Gītā the same combination of the monistic view of the Upaniṣads or the doctrine of the unity of Brahma and Ātman with the Sāṅkhya view relating to the order of creation as is found in the other parts of the Mahābhārata, and this supplies him with additional evidences in support of his contention that the Gītā and the Mahābhārata were both written by the same hand. But what is known as the Sāṅkhya order of creation is really a feature of the Upaniṣadic cosmology, and Tilak is merely lending support to an erroneous notion of Western scholars and uninformed students of Indian philosophy by maintaining that the Upaniṣads teach nothing but the monistic view of the unity of Brahma and Ātman. On a careful study of the Upaniṣads, it will be found that the sages of ancient India are as much alive to the doctrine of

dualism as to monism and as earnest about the distinction between God and the soul, as about their identity. The presence of this peculiar philosophical thought therefore does not justify us in assuming the common authorship of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, but rather indicates the common origin of the philosophical concepts contained in both from the soil of the Upaniṣads. Moreover, as we shall see, the Gītā does not pre-suppose, but precedes the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy.

## SECTION V. FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON MR. TILAK'S VIEWS

124. Mr. Tilak followed a wrong procedure at the outset, for instead of critically discussing the problems of the origin of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata and ascertaining whether they have any organic connection or must be referred to different authors or different periods of history, he has taken the traditional view of the Epic origin and Kṛṣṇaite character of the Gītā for granted, and it is after interpreting the teachings of the Gītā in the light of these pre-conceived ideas and preformed conclusions, that he undertakes in the Appendix of his Gītā-rahasya to justify his position by arguments which he would have certainly judged to be too weak and inadequate, had he given as much prominence to the question of genesis and development as he has given to his exposition of the doctrines of the Gītā. We have seen that neither the mention of the Gītā in six or seven places in the Mahābhārata, nor the so-called similarity in words and thoughts between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata could justify the conclusions drawn by Tilak that the Gītā is a part of the Mahābhārata and that both are composed by the same author.

125. According to Tilak, however, those who ignore the evidences quoted by him or give a twisted interpretation to them and thus prove that the Gītā is interpolated in the Epic, are to be condemned, as their mode of reasoning is *aśāstrīya* (contrary to scriptures) and therefore unacceptable. To the orthodox scholars with whom it is an article of faith to accept the divine authority of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, our procedure may appear no doubt to be unacceptable, but a more scientific and historical study of the text will reveal that, however contrary to the traditional beliefs and scriptural authority such a method may appear to be, it is certainly not contrary to reasoning nor unhistorical. Tilak seems

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to have kept his acute intellect and sound judgment in suspense while treating of the question of the relation between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata in order to fall in line with his dogmatic and orthodox fellow-believers. (*vide* Chap. VI.)

126. In conclusion, Tilak justifies the presence of the Gītā episode in the Mahābhārata in the light of the grand theme of the Epic as a whole. He says that the Gītā is not only concerned with Vedāntic and devotional truths but contains the ethical principles of the greatest ideal man whose character has been described in the Mahābhārata. It was necessary to find a fit place in the Mahābhārata for narrating these ethical principles and thus to insert the Gītā of *Karmayoga* in the Mahābhārata; and poetically no fitter place could be found than the one in which it is actually found. Hence he concludes, the Gītā is not an interpolation, as it is inserted in the Epic in the right place, on the right occasion and on the right grounds.

But as Dahlmann has observed, poetic unity among the various parts of the Epic is one thing and the question of the origin and genesis of these parts is another thing. Many other didactic episodes and some of the minor Purāṇas (like the Harivaṁśa section) could be easily incorporated into the Mahābhārata in the right place on the right grounds and on the right occasion, without impairing the poetic beauty and grandeur of the Epic, or of the episodes, but that would not prove that these later additions were integral and organic parts of the original Epic, nor that they were products of the same age or author.

Mr. Tilak's view presupposes the Bhāgavata origin and Kṛṣṇaite character of the poem, which is a doubtful and controversial point, as we shall see in the next chapter. We agree with Tilak where he says that the present Mahābhārata is not merely an epic (Ārṣa Kāvya) or a history, but a *Samhitā*, a scriptural compilation, in which the subtle questions of *Dharma* and *Adharma* (right and wrong) are decided. If in this religious treatise, says he, *Karmayoga* (ideal of action) is not considered in its religious and philosophical aspects, where else could it be done? It is not a Vedāntic treatise but a *Dharmasamhitā*, that should be the right place for it, otherwise the Mahābhārata as a scripture remains incomplete. So Mr. Tilak congratulates himself and his countrymen on the happy production of this scripture of *Karmayoga* by such an excellent wise and good man as the author of the Mahābhārata,



who was equally expert in the Vedānta and in Ethics. But our learned scholar has altogether evaded the more important question as to whether the Mahābhārata has always been, as it is now, an Epic, a history and a religious text, all combined in one, or whether the religious and moral elements contained in the didactic episodes are later additions. If a purely epico-historical Mahābhārata was at a particular stage of its development transformed into a Saṁhitā or religious text with the authority of the fifth Vedā, or if in course of the development of the Epic it received successive accumulations of didactic pieces which were united into a systematic whole and interwoven into the texture of the Epic by an able editor or compiler, as many modern scholars are inclined to suspect, it is naturally and reasonably to be expected that a beautiful ethico-religious code like the Bhagavad-Gītā could not have escaped this process of interpolation and would rather have been appropriated by the epic redactor at the earliest opportunity.

127. Mr. Tilak himself has admitted that the Mahābhārata is an enlarged edition prepared by Vyāsa out of an earlier and smaller treatise called *Bhārata* and also known as *Jai* (victory). After making this distinction between the smaller and bigger Bhārata, of which the former is the original copy and the latter is a revised and enlarged edition, Mr. Tilak cannot with reason and propriety speak of the Gītā as a part of the original Bhārata Epic, for in his own confession many stories (including of course, didactic episodes like the Gītā) were added to the historical work, Bhārata, later on, when it was turned into the Mahābhārata containing history and solution of moral and religious problems.

128. Thus Mr. Tilak has virtually conceded all that we are contending for, by his distinction of the original Gītā and the original Bhārata from these works in their present forms. For we, too, have maintained that the Gītā was originally an independent treatise of the Upaniṣadic kind which was later on inserted in the Mahābhārata at a place where there was originally a dialogue of similar contents but shorter size. As we have seen, Mr. Tilak could not free himself from the old tradition of regarding the Mahābhārata as a unitary whole and was blinded by the prejudice that there were no additions or interpolations made in the Mahābhārata; and that is why he has to resort to an ingenious hypothesis in order to avoid the most natural and reasonable assumption that the original Gītā was independent of the Mahābhārata and

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was later on inserted in the Epic with many other didactic episodes. If it be urged against our theory that there is no proof of the Gítá having existed in the form of an Upaniṣad prior to its Epic association, we can advance exactly the same objection against Tilak's view of an original Bhárata Epic, which is now extinct, and also as regards the presence of the Gítá in the original Bhárata. The question cannot, of course, be solved by *a priori* considerations alone, but taking into account the internal evidences in the Gítá and the external evidences supplied by the Mahábhárata, it cannot be denied that the probability is very much on our side. As we shall see, the genesis of the Mahábhárata is not rightly conceived by viewing the original Mahábhárata as a miniature form of the present Epic containing the epitomic original of all the didactic episodes incorporated in the latter so that the present Mahábhárata is merely an expansion or elaboration of the original parts without additions of new materials or accretion of new parts, as Tilak seems to suggest; nor can the development of the present Mahábhárata be properly understood if we accept the views of Hopkins, viz., that the original Epic was simply a narration of events, describing the history and the achievements of the Kuru and Pándava families and the story of the great war fought between them, all the didactic materials being considered as later interpolations.

No, the true account of the line of development in the Epic literature can be found to lie in the golden mean, which grants to the original Mahábhárata a poetic-didactic character and yet makes room for the addition of a vast mass of materials including both narrative elements or stories and moral and religious episodes in subsequent ages.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dahlmann's *Das Genesis des Mahábhárata*. (*vide* Chap. V. below).

### CHAPTER III

## HETEROGENEOUS CHARACTER OF THE PRESENT MAHÁBHÁRATA EPIC

### SECTION I. RELATION BETWEEN THE DIDACTIC EPISODES AND THE NARRATIVE PORTIONS OF THE EPIC

#### *(Opinions of Scholars)*

129. When we examine the structure of the present Mahábhárata, we find that the Gítá does not stand alone, but many other episodes of a narrative and didactic kind which were originally independent treatises, have been similarly extracted into the great Epic by interested diascuasts. A survey of the views of competent scholars as to the character of the Mahábhárata and the relation between its didactic and narrative portions will strengthen and confirm our position, and at the same time reveal the weakness and untenability of the arguments of Mr. Tilak relating to the view that the Gítá is an integral part of the Epic.

Serious doubts have been entertained by many of the modern scholars of the East as well as of the West with regard to the genuineness of the present Mahábhárata. Not only Hopkins and Holzmann but Bankimchandra and Bhándárkar, Vaidya and Subbá Ráo, and even Tilak himself have noticed various interpolations and later additions in the great Epic, so that no one with his critical eyes wide open can deny the heterogeneity of the mass of materials contained in this vast Encyclopedia of ancient Indian wisdom.

130. As to the relation between the didactic episodes of the Mahábhárata and the epic story of the blood-feuds between the Kurus and Pándavas, too, there is a divergence of opinion. According to some scholars the narrative and the didactic portions, the epic and the religious texts are composed by the same author and form a unitary whole, while others maintain that these two parts of the Mahábhárata must be viewed as having originally had an independent and separate existence and having been

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joined together later on by one or more learned Editors. It is not incumbent on us to identify ourselves with either of these conflicting views, as we have reasons to think that the original Epic did contain, as every great poetical work must, some lofty moral and religious discourses as its integral parts and that among the interpolated parts of the Mahábhárata must be counted not only purely didactic episodes, but also narrative of stories, anecdotes and even descriptions of geographical interest. As we are here concerned with the nature and position of a didactic episode like the Bhagavad-Gítá let us confine ourselves for the present to the discussion of relevant points that will help us in arriving at definite conclusions about its relation to other didactic treatises or sections in the Epic.

131. A comparison between the Gítá and the Anugítá has already shown us that the former is much older than the latter both in language and in thought, and that the latter is only an imperfect and unsuccessful imitation of the former, there being a wide interval of several centuries separating the two. The same conclusion is forced on us, when we examine the points of similarity and difference between the Gítá and the Mokṣadharma in the Śántiparva, especially, the Náráyāṇiya section. It will appear that the Gítá was the source, not the product of the religious and philosophical ideas conveyed in the Náráyāṇiya section, which expressly refers to the teachings of the Gítá as its original and must have been composed later. Now according to Dahlmann, the Śántiparva and the Anuśāsanaparva, with their mixture of stories and morals, represent the original type, of which the present Mahábhárata Epic is a more highly developed form, and are therefore much older than the Epic as a whole, being originally independent treatises which were subsequently incorporated by the Editors of the Epic. Bankimchandra and Bhándárkar suggest that certain parts of the Mahábhárata like Śántiparva, etc., dealing with spiritual and metaphysical truths, must be regarded as composition of foreign authors and later interpolations. This is also the opinion of Dr. Brajendra Nath Seal who considers the whole of the Śántiparva including the section entitled Náráyāṇiya to be an interpolation. But while Sir R. G. Bhándarkar maintains that the Náráyāṇiya may have been an older treatise of independent origin, Dr. Seal is inclined to suspect Christian influence on this section. But whichever of the learned scholars may be right,

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the unanimous opinion of Bankimchandra, Dahlmann, Bhándárkar and Seal with regard to the fact that Śántiparva and other sections of the Epic had at first been of independent origin and were later on interpolated in the Mahābhārata, cannot be disregarded. And once we accept this conclusion as sound, our views about the independent pre-Epic character of the original Gītā and the heterogeneous nature of the present Epic stand on a secure ground.

### SECTION II. THE ORIGINAL BHĀRATA AND THE LATER MAHĀBHĀRATA MR. C. V. VAIDYA'S VIEWS

132. Another eminent scholar, Mr. C. V. Vaidya, has supplied us with abundant materials, which go a long way in establishing our hypothesis that the Gītā was originally an independent treatise and subsequently added to the Epic. Mr. Vaidya makes a distinction between the original Bhārata and three successive editions of the Epic in the hands of Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Sauti. As regards the difficult and delicate question of how the Mahābhārata attained to its present bulk, Mr. Vaidya is compelled to admit a large number of interpolations in the present Epic. We are told by this learned scholar that among the reasons which led to the expansion of the Epic into its present shape must be counted the ambition of the last Editor, Sauti, "to make it an all-embracing repository of legendary lore," and "depository of knowledge," and "a vehicle of moral and religious instruction." Now what could be more reasonable than to suppose that the Gītā, which is at once a treasure-house of learning, knowledge and moral and religious instructions, was selected by the Editor as one of the pieces to be interpolated? There are probably two reasons why Mr. Vaidya considers the Gītā to have been a part of the original Epic, or at least of the earlier phase of the Bhārata (Vaiśampāyana's edition) and not a later addition, viz., (1) the language of the Gītā shows its proximity to the age of the Upaniṣads; (2) the Vaiṣṇavite character of the original Epic implies that the Gītā was composed by Vyāsa and remodelled by Vaiśampāyana, both of whom were Vaiṣṇavas, according to Mr. Vaidya. Now, as regards the second of these reasons, we have found reasons to question the Vaiṣṇava origin and the Kṛṣṇaite character of the Gītā, and in our view Mr. Vaidya's opinions like those of many



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other scholars are wholly unfounded ; and as regards the first, we admit that not only the language but also the thought of the Gítá shows its Upaniṣadic origin.

133. But Mr. Vaidya himself has provided us with more adequate reasons to suspect that this old composition has been interpolated in the present Epic by later editors. For if, according to Mr. Vaidya, the Saraswati Upákhyaṇa in the Gadáparva, the Rámopákhyaṇa in the Banaparva, the Jambukhanda and Bhûkhanda sections in the Bhīṣmaparva, the dialogue between Nárada and Yudhiṣṭhira on the science of political government in the beginning of the Sabhāparva and much of the Śántiparva and Anuśāsanaparva are rightly to be regarded as later interpolations, because they unnecessarily interrupt the natural sequences of the context, then exactly on the same grounds, we are justified in holding the Bhagavad-Gítá to be foreign to the Epic Mahábhárata in every respect. We have seen that the Gítá does not fit in with its surroundings, but rather interrupts the account of the great battle of Kurukṣetra, and forms a digression of many chapters and many hundred verses causing a break in the context just at the point where the story has reached its highest interest and the actors in the Epic as well as the readers are bound to be intensely excited over the actions that are to follow with their grave consequences : and these are the very reasons which have led Mr. Vaidya to consider the various episodes mentioned above as interpolations. As regards the numerous additions made to the Epic to make it a vehicle of moral and religious instructions, our learned scholar admits that "in fact, the work has almost lost its character as an Epic poem, and has become and has always been acknowledged as a Smṛti and a Dharmaśāstra." That the Gítá is one such didactic element added to the epic Bhárata with a view to give to the latter its authoritative character as a text-book on religion and morals is "so apparent that it hardly requires any proof," to quote Mr. Vaidya's words in another connection. For the Gítá itself has been recognized as a Smṛti and frequently referred to and quoted in later philosophical and religious works like the Brahmasûtras, Bhaktisûtras and Purāṇas, if the Indian tradition and opinions of commentators are to be accepted. Moreover, the independent existence and distinct character of the Bhagavad-Gítá may be inferred also from the fact admitted by Vaidya that the *Anugítá*, an episode in the Aśwamedhaparva, is "probably a

second-rate imitation of the Gītā and has perhaps been subsequently added, for an imitation is generally made after works which are of ancient origin and distinct merit, as the Gītā itself is an imitation of the older Upaniṣads. Moreover we find in Mr. Vaidya's views concerning the didactic elements in the Śāntiparva and Anuśāsana-parva a very significant hint and valuable suggestion which seems to apply equally in the case of the Gītā. According to Mr. Vaidya "it is not possible to say that these Parvas are entirely new additions made about the time of the last recasting of the Bhārata, about B.C. 200. . . . For certain portions of these Parvas are indeed old . . . and it is probable that these did form part of the original Bhārata." We are not only perfectly in agreement with this view, but we have already extended a similar view in respect of the Gītā, for while we have maintained that the Divine Song was an independent Upaniṣad in its origin, we have also accepted Holzmänn's suggestion that there must have been a short dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the original Bhārata Epic, similar to or identical with the second chapter of the Gītā in its present form containing such topics as the duties of Kṣātrīyas to fight, the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, etc., and it is perfectly within the limits of reasonable probability that advantage was taken of such a dialogue by the interpolators in inserting the Gītā Upaniṣad in the Epic.

134. Mr. Vaidya has found other fruitful sources of extension of the Bhārata Epic. For example, the repetition of the same story, the imitation and addition of an episode resembling one already existing, the desire for poetical embellishment, the anticipation or suggestion of events as a poetical art, the explanation of extraordinary conduct and Vyāsa's frequent appearance on the scene by his supernatural powers for the purpose of such explanations and many other of these devices were frequently resorted to by the interpolators with a view to incorporating into the Epic as much of the mass of floating materials of the legendary and didactic kind as possible. Taking for granted that the Bhagavad-Gītā was an independent treatise, having had its origin in the Upaniṣadic period, it is not difficult to explain with the aid of one or more of these motives on the part of the later editors how and why it came to be extracted into the Epic Mahābhārata, for a sublime and beautiful poem like the Gītā could not fail to attract the notice of the learned interpolators as providing a suitable

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opportunity for the application of their editorial skill and working it out into the framework of the Great Epic.

135. But Mr. Vaidya's concession goes further than this. He ascribes the spectacle of a vast didactic work raised on the foundation of the legend of the Bhárata war to the fact that the teachers of Brahmanism "thought it necessary to bring together *en masse* all the floating materials, for the preaching of their religion, into one focus" (p. 8). Thus according to Vaidya the recasting of the Bhárata was a result of the growing evil of the spread of Buddhism. Whatever may be the history of the growth of the Epic, this much at least seems to be certain, that the Bhagavad-Gítá was one of these "floating materials" coming down from the Upaniṣadic age which was subsequently taken up into the body of the Mahábhárata, when the Bhárata Epic was made a *Smṛti* or *Dharma-grantha* (religious scripture). In any case, Mr. Vaidya is quite right in holding that much of the didactic part of the Mahábhárata is a later development of and addition to the original Epic.

We are therefore not without support from modern Indian scholars when we maintain the Mahábhárata to be a heterogeneous mixture of elements which were at first independent of each other but were later on combined more or less into a systematic whole with a definite purpose..

136. Some of the Western scholars, like Hopkins, too, have gone to the length of exactly determining which parts of the Epic are original and which are later additions. In an appendical note (I. 1-19) on his translation of the Bhagavad-Gítá, Garbe offers a linguistic proof of the fact that the Bhagavad-Gítá is an interpolation in the Mahábhárata, viz., that Adh. 43 V. 3 cd. of the Mahábhárata which immediately follows the close of the episode is a verbal repetition of Adh. 25. V. 13 cd. (i.e., of Gítá I. 19), showing that the poet intended to remind the reader of the situation or the scene of war after the interpolated Text. Garbe tries to fix the exact beginning of the original Gítá with I. 20, but his proof is untenable, because the interpolator has so altered the surroundings of the inserted text that no linguistic support of his theory is possible, as he himself admits in another place.

137. We are, however, inclined to agree with Mr. Vaidya when he says that notwithstanding numerous interpolations the later editors of the Mahábhárata have succeeded in moulding a work of such an enormous extent into a harmonious and consistent

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whole, and it is this ingenious arrangement and systematic ordering of the various parts of the Epic by the editors which may account for the curious phenomenon, that some of these very reasons, which, according to Vaidya, served as efficient motives of the editor of the Epic for inserting a large number of foreign elements in the body of the Mahābhārata, are now employed by scholarly critics of the Mahābhārata, like Tilak and Subbā Rāo, to prove that the Gītā, nay, the whole mass of didactic episodes, forms an integral part of the Great Epic, and was the work of the same Vyāsa who composed and compiled the Mahābhārata. We shall now proceed to examine the contention of Mr. Subbā Rāo that the Epic in its present form is and has always been a unitary whole, in which the various historical narrative and religious-didactic materials have been consistently blended into a harmonious synthesis by the genius of a single author.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE MAHÁBHÁRATA VIEWED AS A UNITARY WHOLE (MR. SUBBÁ RÁO'S ARGUMENTS REFUTED)

#### SECTION I. "THE MAHÁBHÁRATA INDEX" REPRESENTING THE ORTHODOX TRADITION

138. Subbá Ráo and Joseph Dahlmann are perhaps the only scholars who have tried to read into the Mahábhárata the working out of a unitary plan in spite of all its inconsistencies, irregularities, repetitions and interpolations, and who have sought to discover in the Great Epic a harmonious combination of history and truth, of poetry and morals, and according to whom all the parts of this monumental work, narrative as well as didactic, are so closely interwoven that one has no meaning and cannot be properly interpreted without the other. Viewed from their standpoint, the various parts of the Mahábhárata in its extant form make up a systematic unity, and the philosophical and religious episodes, including the Bhagavad-Gítá and the like, are integral parts of the Epic whole. We shall take up for our consideration the views of Mr. Subbá Ráo in this chapter, and devote the next to the discussion of Dahlmann's theory.

139. If we want to have a fairly correct idea of the important place which the Mahábhárata occupies in ancient literature of the Hindus and the high honour in which its supposed author Kṛṣṇa Dwaipáyana, also called Bádaráyaṇa Vyása, is held to this day by the enlightened Indians of the orthodox society, we could not consult a more reliable and competent authority than Mr. Subbá Ráo, who in his preface to the Index of the Kumbhakoṇa edition of the Mahábhárata (published by T. R. Kṛṣṇacháryya, 1914) has faithfully represented the orthodox and traditional view of the Mahábhárata in relation to its various didactic elements.

A critical estimate of the traditional point of view, as represented by Mr. Subbá Ráo, will help us to a large extent to determine the exact relation between the Gítá and the Mahábhárata ; and it is by removing the husk from the kernel of truth contained in the



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time-honoured dogmatic assumptions accepted by these orthodox scholars of our country, that we may expect to arrive at sound and definite conclusions with regard to the constructive side of our study of the religious and philosophical background of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

140. In the Mahābhārata Index, Mr. Subbā Rāo has dwelt on two important topics at some length from various points of view, viz., (i) that the Mahābhārata had been from the beginning a work of reputed extent and character, and (ii) that Śṛṅṣṇa as an *Avatāra* (incarnation) of the Almighty God, was really connected with the Epic story which is but a subordinate theme in the work. With regard to the first point, he has maintained that the author of the Mahābhārata was the same Vyāsa who compiled and divided the Vedas, composed the Purāṇas and Brahmasūtras, and who belonged to the family of Kurus, and that the Great Epic is at once a vast storehouse of Vedic wisdom partaking of the character of Purāṇas and also an *itiḥāsa*, an authentic history of the Kuru race and the great war between the sons of Pāṇdu and the sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, so that both the narrative and the didactic elements of the Mahābhārata are original contributions of this illustrious author, forming mutually supplementary parts of the same whole or members of the same organization. With regard to the second point, we are told that the central object of Vedavyāsa in writing this Epic was to glorify the deeds of Kṛṣṇa, who was recognized to be the supreme spirit descended on earth in human form with a view to securing the triumph of righteousness. We are at present concerned only with the first point, while the second point will occupy our thoughts in the next book. (*vide* Part III.)

141. When we examine the grounds on which Mr. Subbā Rāo bases his view of the Mahābhārata as a unitary whole, we find that the arguments advanced in support of his conclusions are more or less in the form of assumptions, which have no secure basis on ascertained facts of history but rest mainly on time-honoured traditions. These latter themselves are either products of superstitious faith in a particular religious creed or have been vitiated by some theological dogmas, so that it is difficult to subject them to historical criticism or pass any judgment on them from the rationalistic standpoint.

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## SECTION II. VYÁSA AS THE SOLE AUTHOR OF THE EPIC

142. The subjectivity and the inconsistency of his arguments will be more than apparent if we consider the question of the unity of the authorship of the Epic, which is perhaps the cornerstone of his theory of the unitary character of the Mahábhárata : (a) "Admitting to be true all the circumstances that the critics may point out," says Mr. Subbá Ráo, "we may still continue to believe in the uninterrupted tradition that Bádaráyana Vyása was a real personage, the real and sole author of the original Mahábhárata. Otherwise it is inexplicable why Vyása is interwoven in the whole history much more intimately than Kṛṣṇa himself." Curiously enough, it is on the basis of the same "uninterrupted tradition" and of the Epic story itself that Mr. Vaidya has built up his theory of the three successive editions of the Mahábhárata in the hands of Vyása, Vaiśampáyana, and Sauti with copious addition and interpolations at each new stage of its development, and it is on the same data that Mr. Tilak has tried to establish that Vyása was not only the author of the original Bhárata but also the editor of the Epic Mahábhárata and that from the lesser Bhárata, which was also called "the Triumph" (*Jai*), the same Vyása composed the greater Bhárata or the present Mahábhárata. Thus we find that neither the ancient tradition nor modern scholarship of educated Hindus supports the dogmatic assertion of Mr. Subbá Ráo that Vyása was the real and sole author of the original Mahábhárata.

143. (b) Mr. Ráo himself has admitted a considerable number of later additions and interpolations in the Epic and we have seen that all competent authorities of the East and the West are almost unanimous in regarding chapters like Sántiparta, Anuśásanaparva and similar didactic portions of the Mahábhárata as compositions of foreign authors or later editors ; and yet in spite of such cogent reasons and critical views, Mr. Subbá Ráo would cling to his belief that Vyása is the sole author of the work. For him any few passages or even any portion of the matter which we might now consider to be interpolations cannot prove the multiplicity of authorship. How can they, if the unitary character of the Epic and the unity of its authorship are accepted as an article of creed ?

144. (c) Mr. Subbá Ráo gives to his faith the appearance of reason when he supports his position with the remark that "the

appellation 'Vyása' has always pointed to one person who was at one time able to cope with the gigantic work of composition and the re-arrangement of all the recoverable Vedas. Only such a person should certainly be credited with the power of using all his lore towards a grand practical purpose as the production of the Mahábhárata." But what if the term "Vyása" does not stand for a proper name but for an epithet or title of distinction applied to a class of scholars and thinkers who were entrusted with the editing, arranging, systematizing and even composing the scriptural texts of ancient India, as Bankimchandra and other scholars have suggested? Otherwise it is inconceivable how one and the same Vyása could be credited with the division of the Vedas, the authorship of the whole of the Great Epic, the composition of all the eighteen Puráṇas and that of the Brahmasūtras—works which present very different strata of thought and language and are evidently products of different periods of Indian history widely remote from one another.

### SECTION III. THE MAHÁBHÁRATA AND THE PURÁṆAS AS THE WORKS OF THE SAME VYÁSA

145. But this learned scholar is not to be daunted by any of these difficulties. For, with regard to the relation between the Mahábhárata and the Puráṇas, he says, "That Bādarāyaṇa Vyása was the author of the work (i.e. the Epic) is not merely an oral tradition, but it is a fact so frequently declared in the Puráṇas without an exception." And yet he asserts in the same breath, that "If Vyása re-arranged and recovered the Vedas, he also amplified these good old Puráṇas in recasting them in the popular style." It passes our understanding how these two statements of Mr. Subbá Ráo can be reconciled. For, if all the eighteen Puráṇas without an exception have quoted the Mahábhárata as the work of Vyása, the Mahábhárata must have been an earlier work known to all of them, and in that case the Epic and the Puráṇas could not be works of the same author. What is more curious is that the Epic Mahábhárata in its present form mentions the eighteen Puráṇas as if the latter had already attained reputation and become authoritative, and that Vyása himself plays an important role in the story of the Epic as well as in the myths of some of the Puráṇas.

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146. Another instance of self-contradiction and chronological inconsistency in the views of Mr. Subbá Ráo may be discovered in the proposition put forward by him that the "Mahábhárata is an encyclopaedic compilation of all available informations contained in the old Puráṇas, with other additions," for this proposition can hardly fit in with the fact that the Puráṇas declare Bádaráyaṇa Vyása to be the author of the Epic. As a matter of fact, such mutual quotations and admirations are so common in the ancient scriptures of India that it is idle to base the antiquity or authenticity of any particular text or of its author on an allusion or reference made in another work.

147. Mr. Subbá Ráo himself has been compelled to make a distinction between the old and the new Puráṇas, and to admit that the Puráṇas were not originally the works of Vyása, but belonged to the early Vedic period and were later on amplified and recast by Vyása. What, then, prevents us from extending the same hypothesis to the Mahábhárata and accepting the views of Bankimchandra, Vaidya and Tilak that there was an older Bhárata as well as a newer Mahábhárata, and that Vyása was only one of the *many authors* whose contributions have gone to make up the bulk of the present Epic?

148. I am entirely in agreement with Bankimchandra, who says that Vyása was only a title (Upádhi) awarded to Kṛṣṇa the Islander for his memorable work of the "Division" or "re-arrangement" of the Vedas, and that the compiler of the Vedas may not have been the same person who edited the Puráṇas, but this latter also may have been the recipient of the title of "Vyása." To Bankimchandra the eighteen Puráṇas in their present form do not appear to have been arranged or edited by the same person or at the same period, for the Puráṇas themselves contain evidences of their having been compiled in different times. Whoever then prepared a compilation after reading several Puráṇic stories was entitled to the designation of Vyása, and the tradition of eighteen Puráṇas being the works of Vyása may have been due to this fact. There are many reasons for thinking that Vyása was not a single person, but was a title conferred on many persons. Vyása the composer of the Vedántasûtras and even a Vyása who was the commentator of the Pátañjala system of philosophy—both of them could not be one and the same Vyása (Kṛṣṇa Charitra, Part I, ch. 14). We may add that even if Vyása were the author

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of the Gītā, it might not have been the same Vyāsa who composed the Mahābhārata. Accepting this view of the case, the assumption of the common authorship of the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata falls to the ground, and therewith one of the main foundations of Mr. Subbā Rāo's hypothesis of Vyāsa being the sole author of the Mahābhārata is shaken.

### SECTION IV. THE MAHĀBHĀRATA AND THE BRAHMASŪTRA COMPOSED BY THE SAME VYĀSA

149. What we have said about the relation between the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas applies equally to that between the Mahābhārata and the Brahmasūtras. Nevertheless this learned editor of the Mahābhārata Index adduces in support of his conclusions this doubtful assumption sanctified by the Indian tradition, viz., the proposition that the same Vyāsa, who composed the Epic, was also the author of the Brahmasūtras. The references to Smṛti in the Brahmasūtras are interpreted by all commentators as references to the Mahābhārata. From this Mr. Subbā Rāo infers that "their common author did so refer to his own work to secure its recognition among the authorities prior to the Sūtras." Evidently Mr. Rāo does not fully realize the precise bearing and implication of this inference, for, strictly speaking, it amounts to a confession that Vyāsa, the supposed common author of the Mahābhārata and the Brahmasūtras, was guilty of an intellectual dishonesty and almost committed a moral offence of resorting to a similitude with a view to securing recognition for one of his own works (viz., the Mahābhārata). In other words, Vyāsa mentioned the name of the Mahābhārata in the Brahmasūtras, another later work of his, with a view to raising the position of the former among the ancient works of great authority as a scriptural text.

150. The force of this objection may be realized if we quote Mr. Subbā Rāo himself. He tells us, inconsistently enough, almost in the same breath that "This quotation of the Bhārata in the Sūtras is the best evidence for proving the greatness of the authority of the Bhārata at the time for deciding a question." In other words, this great scholar would have us believe that although the Mahābhārata and the Brahmasūtras are works of the same author,



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the latter has referred to the former as a great authority *in order to secure a particular end*, viz., to give to the former the appearance of an ancient work of the same standing as other scriptural texts prior to the Sûtras, and yet he would uphold the great authority of the Mahābhārata *on the ground of its being quoted in the Brahmasûtras*. If the supposed common author really wanted to deceive anybody by this self-quotation, we must admit that his object has been more than fulfilled in as much as even scholars like Mr. Subbá Ráo have been most effectively misled by this false appearance.

151. But the anomaly becomes still more puzzling when we take into consideration the conflicting views held by many learned Pandits in regard to the interpretation to be put on the word "Brahmasûtrapadaih" i.e., the teachings of the Brahmasûtras as quoted in support of certain doctrines in Chapter XIII. 5 of the Bhagavad-Gîtá which is a part of the present Mahābhārata. Thus even an eminent scholar like Mr. Tilak not only ascribes the authorship of the Brahmasûtras to the compiler of Mahābhārata (viz., Vedavyása), but maintains that the Bhagavad-Gîtá as a part of the great Epic had been composed by Vyása earlier than the Vedāntasûtras. And yet in explaining the reference to the Brahmasûtra made in the Gîtá (Chapter XIII. 5) he gratuitously assumes that this verse must have been a later addition inserted by Vyása himself at the time of editing the Mahābhārata Epic after his composition of the Brahmasûtras. According to Tilak the object of the interpolation of this verse on the part of the great Vyása was to secure for his later works (viz., Vedāntasûtras) a recognized place among the authoritative scriptural texts. This view of Tilak indirectly lends support to that of Subbá Ráo, and both these scholars while adhering to the orthodox position unconsciously admit the possibility of interpolations in the Epic and the Gîtá. What is more, they expose the great Vyása to the charge of intellectual dishonesty or similitude, which is wholly untenable as it is inconsistent with the high level of rectitude and truthfulness preached and practised by the R̥sis of old. The interpretation of this reference to Brahmasûtras as given by Tilak is unnecessary too, as most of the old commentators on the Gîtá explain the term "Brahmasûtras" in the sense of the Upaniṣads, which are the earliest foundation (the first of the three *prasthānas*) of the Vedānta Philosophy, the Gîtá and the Brahmasûtras of

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Bádaráyana representing later stages of the development of the system.<sup>1</sup>

### SECTION V. UNITY OF THE DIDACTIC AND THE NARRATIVE PARTS OF THE EPIC

152. "The genius of the author," says Mr. Subbá Ráo, "is shown in combining two sets of truths, viz., (i) the true history of the Kuru race and the Great War, and (ii) a vast store of eternal and yet practical knowledge embodied in the Vedas, which he tried to recover, arrange and systematize. He has blended facts of history and consecrated truths of old into a consistent mass."

"To a philosopher, gross concrete facts are but particular expressions of the general and eternal truths and so he can make them speak what he reads in them. Thus the work became *Itihása*, at once an authentic history and a striking exposition of didactic truths. The grand living notion of the Mahábhárata can be justified and realized only by taking our stand on this ground. Otherwise it is absurd to suppose that the work was so great and so highly sanctified simply because it consisted of 24,000 verses describing the discharge of arrows and weapons, bloodshed and atrocity and devilish dance of headless bodies."

153. There is perhaps nothing unnatural or unreasonable in the assumption that the author of the Mahábhárata, if he belonged to the family of Kuru Princes at all, was not without a bias of family pride and nationalistic spirit, which may have subconsciously, if not directly, worked in his mind as he composed this illustrious story. This assumption of a family connection between the Poet and the principal heroes of the Epic may enable us to some extent to solve the problem of why the narrative of events of the war seems to be partial and favourable now to this and now to that belligerent party, without having resort to the hypothesis of a Kuruite re-handling of an originally Pándavite tale or a Pándavite rehandling of an originally Kaurava (i.e., pro-Duryodhana) story, as advanced by some scholars.

154. But there is not the slightest evidence to sustain the opinion of Mr. Subbá Ráo that the author of the Epic has "blended

<sup>1</sup> It may be noted here that while according to Mr. Subbá Ráo the Bhárata is quoted in the Brahmasūtras, according to Tilak the Brahmasūtras are quoted in the Gītā (which is a part of the Bhárata) and that the object is the same in the both cases, viz., to raise the status of a later work by citing its authority in earlier texts written by the same author.

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facts of history and the consecrated truths of old into a consistent mass," or that the Mahábhárata is "at once an authentic history and a striking exposition of didactic truths." We must pronounce his judgment on this point as being too subjective to be true. Even admitting with Mr. Ráo that "a philosopher may view gross concrete facts as particular expressions of the general and eternal truths and can make them speak what he reads," we cannot accept the view that a philosophical work can make facts of fictions or turn an imaginary story into a historical reality. We must not be misunderstood. We have nothing to say against the historicity of the Kurus, the Pándavas and the Yádavas and other races that are mentioned in the Epic, or against that of the Great War of Kurukṣetra. All these heroes and heroines of the Epic may have been human beings like ourselves that once lived in this ancient land of the Bhárata, and the epic story may have been based, for aught we know, on certain historical facts and events vitally connected with the destiny of the Indian people in that remote antiquity. But admitting all these, we are not entitled to regard the Epic Mahábhárata as an *authentic history* any more than we can treat the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Sir Walter Scott as text-books on history, although the materials for certain plays and novels of these renowned writers were taken from the real history and the actual life of men. Nor have we any better right to hold that the exposition of didactic truths in the Mahábhárata forms an integral part of the Epic or is an exact reproduction of the discourses or conversations that actually took place in those pre-historical days, or that these didactic portions were composed by the same hand that wrote the Epic story, than to consider that the speeches of Antonio and Brutus given in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* represent exactly what took place in Rome more than two thousand years ago, or are verbally reported from the direct narratives of contemporary witnesses, or that the didactic truths contained in the metric portions and the fabulous stories of the Hitopadeśa are written by the same author. Does Mr. Subbá Ráo wish us to believe that all the legendary stories (Ákhyánas and Upákhyañas) with didactic expositions, which intersperse the narration of the development of the central theme in the Epic, are taken from actual facts of the "authentic history"? To take for instance the particular case of the Bhagavad-Gítá, are we to believe that the whole of the eighteen chapters and seven hundred verses of our text

faithfully and accurately represents the conversation that actually took place between Sañjaya and Dhṛtarāṣṭra and between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the eve of the Great War? I am afraid such attempts to knit together the epic story of the Great War and the didactic sections contained in the Mahābhārata betray an uncritical and unhistorical spirit and may fitly be compared with the old method of studying the Bible which still prevails among the orthodox clergy, and according to which the Holy Bible is to be looked upon as a revealed scripture of infallible truths representing at once the authentic history of some ancient races and the reliable biography and teaching of the prophets and saints of the Jews and Christians.

155. To establish his thesis that in the Great Epic facts of history and the consecrated truths of old have been blended into a consistent mass, Mr. Subbā Ráo has boldly pried into the secrets of the mind of its great author, and discovered the inner motive and the main object of the writings of Vyása. According to this learned editor of the twentieth century, "Bádaráyana's ambition was to write a practical exposition of the matter which comprehended the whole field of his labours and to make his work brilliant with striking illustrations he enriched it with his wisdom." Hence it is that the Bhārata is looked upon by sages and saints as superior to the Vedas themselves. The Mahābhārata, he tells us, is not an epic, for an epic does not rise to the rank of the Vedas. Upaniṣads speak of the Mahābhārata as *Vedānām Vedah* (i.e., the Veda among the Vedas): it was not only regarded as the fifth Veda, but as something more than the four Vedas. It is an *Itihāsa*, its aim being primarily and mainly to illustrate the general and abstract truths by reference to authenticated history; it is a link in the growth of traditional literature connecting the Vedic on the one side and the post-Vedic on the other. Again we are told, the aim of Bádaráyana was to exhibit the whole range of Vedic thought in one place in order to compel a certain conclusion for all times to come. The Vedas speak the truths observed both in general and in the particular. The seer or the world could see these truths in the history of Kurus and Pándavas, i.e., the theories of life were exemplified in that history in a very striking manner.

156. In another passage, Mr. Subbā Ráo says: "The first theme of Vyasa was to benefit the world by means of wisdom contained in the whole range of literature he had to purify and edit. The history of his own race, the state of society and the view he had



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of the future, all combined to concentrate his attention on the representative character of men and events that passed before his eyes. The latter theme, the phenomenal phase of the world, was made to serve as an apt illustration of the first.

"The *Upākhyānas* are also generally historical in matter and typical accounts handed down from antiquity. The didactic portions are necessarily the inferences of valuable truths following from the concrete history." Lastly, apprehending perhaps that all these explanations might not suffice to disarm the criticism of his opponents, who fail to recognize the unity of the Epic as a whole and who refuse to accept the oneness of its authorship, Mr. Ráo remarks in another place: "All the circumstances adduced in support of the theory of many authors may be explained away by recognizing a dramatic spirit in the author, who apparently makes many and different characters speak the truth at every step." The meaning of this is made clearer in another passage which is more explicit on the point: "Is the historical setting incompatible with the didactic form? The authors or the interpolators seem to have exceeded all limits of propriety and indulged in reflections and discussions which are by no means necessary to advance the theme: they had no sense of proportion necessary for a symmetrical and harmonious whole. But these objections are removed and all didactic materials are justified in the light of the dramatic purpose at the bottom. Besides, the exposition of didactic truths is the main theme, and history comes in as illustrations, and that history is made very striking as illustrations ought to be."

157. Now, much as we appreciate the valuable suggestions about the nature and the object of the Mahábhárata, contained in these deep-meaning statements of Mr. Subbá Ráo, we are sorry to differ from him as to the truth of his main theory, which appears to us to be untenable on the following grounds:—

(i) Two parts of Mr. Subbá Ráo's theory can hardly fit in with one another. He says at one and the same breath (a) that the story was written in illustration of the eternal truths of Vedic wisdom, and (b) that the didactic portions are necessarily the inferences of valuable truths following from the concrete history. We are thus at a loss to understand which of these two elements, viz., the exposition of didactic truths and the description of the story illustrating these truths, had priority of claims on the ground-plan of the Epic as designed by the original author. We may well concede



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that the epic story was written with a view to strikingly illustrate certain eternal truths of history and general theories of life ; but in that case we cannot at the same time maintain that the didactic elements are inferences from the story. Or to reverse the case, the story of the war between the Kurus and Pándavas may be the main theme, from which the didactic truths were drawn as inevitable corollaries, but then we are debarred from holding that these corollaries were the chief goal or theme, of which the story was merely an exemplification.

158. (ii) Every heroic poem or epic, nay, every drama or novel, conveys some moral lessons for the guidance of mankind, and many of them contain long discourses on the supremacy of right over wrong and enable us to deduce from them conclusions in favour of the ultimate triumph of virtue, but that does not elevate these literary productions to the rank of authentic history, nor of authoritative *Smṛti* or Law Book. As Winternitz remarks: "Surely if this be enough to warrant the original *Smṛti* character of the Mahábhárata, we shall find few works of fiction in our libraries which might not as well be shelf-marked as 'Law Books.' In most of them (at any rate in those of the good old style) we shall find a virtuous hero with a villain as his counterpart, heart-rending sufferings of the virtuous, and the most provoking prosperity of the wicked, until the glorious triumph of virtue over vice exactly as in the Mahábhárata."<sup>1</sup>

159. (iii) Even granting that the original Epic Bhárata of 24,000 verses was not purely a descriptive poem on the battle of Kurukṣetra, but was rich in truths of the Vedic wisdom and moral exhortations, it does not follow that all the didactic portions of the Mahábhárata form a harmonious whole and are systematically combined with the epic story. No dramatic spirit and no sophistical interpretation can explain away the fact that in the Epic there are teachings of very different types and schools of thinking and of widely divergent sects of religion, sometimes mutually conflicting, at other times showing unmistakable signs of mechanical combination through a spirit of eclecticism which is surely a product of later times. How will Mr. Ráo account for the fact that the same hero and religious teacher, say Kṛṣṇa or Arjuna, appears in different forms on different occasions and is credited with utterances and behaviours violently in contrast with one another? No honest

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Dahlmann, *Genesis des Mahábhárata*.

student of the Mahábhárata who approaches the study of its contents with the right attitude and unbiassed or impartial spirit as well as with necessary equipments of critical insight and historical spirit, can fail to be struck by the amazing variety of religious and philosophical materials in the Epic, which represent different strata of thought and language, separated from one another by wide intervals of time, and which are yet put in the mouth of the same person or said to belong to the same school of thought (e.g., the teachings in the Bhagavad-Gítá, the Náráyāṇiya section and the Anugítá). Some of the modern scholars have declared these incongruities in the Epic as puzzling anomalies, and given up in despair all attempts to discover any systematic unity in its contents, while others have candidly sought to remove these contradictions by showing how different authors have contributed to the different parts of the Epic at different periods. Telang, Vaidya, Bhándárkar, Bankimchandra, all belong to this last-mentioned class. Even Mr. Subbá Ráo himself has admitted that many interpolations were made by later Buddhistic and other foreign writers of non-Vedic schools, which altered the character of this Brahmanical text. How does he guarantee that within the purely Brahmanical portions of the Epic the unity of the didactic elements has not been impaired by the Viṣṇuite and Shivaite scholars competing with one another in inserting appropriate sections in glorification of their own respective gods—as is evident from certain chapters in the Sántiparva?

160. (iv) While we agree with Mr. Ráo in his view that the Mahábhárata had its root in the Vedic religion and society, we are far from accepting his view that the "Mahábhárata exhibits the whole range of Vedic thought in one place" and that it is "a practical exposition of the matter which comprehended the whole field of the labours of Bádaráyana in respect of the Vedic lore"—propositions which share the faulty character of too sweeping a generalization. One does not find in the Mahábhárata a systematic development of the Vedic wisdom, far less a detailed discussion or summary of all the portions of the Vedic literature, covering the Samhitás, the Bráhmaṇas, the Áraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads. A comprehensive exposition of the whole range of Vedic thought, as presented in the entire field of Vedic literature—if it was ever attempted at all by Vyása or any other author—has not come down to us and is at least not to be found in the present Epic, not even in its didactic episodes, as they contain a heterogeneous mass of

ideas and theories prevalent in the various post-Vedic periods, put together side by side with much that is admittedly of a Vedic origin.

161. (v) The Mahābhārata is no doubt regarded as a fifth Veda, but it is not the first nor the best of the Vedas, as it does not belong to the Śruti but to the Smṛti class of Indian literature, and as such occupies a lower rank, just as the fifth Veda. Mr. Ráo's conception of the Mahābhārata as *Vedānām Vedam* or the Veda of the Vedas is based on the doubtful interpretation of a passage in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, in which, however, the term "Veda of the Vedas" refers to *Grammar* and not to the Epic, according to Śankara and other commentators.

162. (vi) But Subbá Ráo's enthusiasm exceeds all limits of propriety and violates all canons of historical criticism when he maintains that the *Upākhyānas* (legends and stories) which interrupt the main story of the Epic along with the didactic episodes are *generally historical in matter*. We need not stop to discuss this extremely credulous view, but leave it to the judgment of the academic circle of historians, with the remark that a sound critic like C. V. Vaidya and even an orthodox scholar like Bankimchandra saw the futility of proving the historicity of all the incidents and details of the Mahābhārata story, and they not only regarded these *Upākhyānas* as later interpolations, but also explained some of them symbolically or metaphorically or gave a mode of spiritual interpretation to them.<sup>1</sup>

163. (vii) Mr. Subbá Ráo has cited the authority of the great Śrī Mādhavāchāryya in support of his conclusions without realizing that the opinions of this scholar of Mediæval India, if examined carefully, are either open to the same objections as we have pressed against Subbá Ráo, or serve to weaken the foundation of Subbá Ráo's theory. For (a) according to Mādhavāchāryya, the "History" of the Mahābhārata has been extracted "from all Purānas, from the Pancharātra, from the Bhārata, from the Vedas and from the Rāmāyaṇa." This means that we must regard the Mahābhārata to be a later product of the post-Vedic age when the Vedas have already found their rivals in other scriptures like the Purānas, the Pañcharātra and the Rāmāyaṇa, each of which perhaps claimed

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Vaidya's criticism with regard to the Tīrthayātra, Sarasvatī Upākhyāna, Yakṣa-praśna episode, marriage of Draupadī, Kṛṣṇa-Duryodhana dialogue in the Gadāparva; and the story of Upamanyu praising Śiva and mentioning Kṛṣṇa's penances for years, and cf. Bankimchandra's remarks on the marriage of Draupadī, the burning of the Khāndava forest, etc.

zealous adherents among the orthodox circles of the Brahmanical society, and that the author of the Mahábhárata attempted to combine in the Epic the teachings of the Vedic schools, of the Bhágavata sect, of the Puráṇas and the Vedánta, as well as the materials already existing in the original Bhárata and Rámáyana. But how could Mr. Ráo reconcile this position of the Mahábhárata in the history of Indian literature with his view about the antiquity of the Epic (the date of which he believes to be somewhere about 3000 B.C.) and with his supposition that Bádaráyana who composed the Mahábhárata and divided the Vedas, recast the Puráṇas and was the author of the Brahmasûtras? According to the traditional commentators, the Brahmasûtras of Bádaráyana criticize and refute the Buddhistic philosophers and therefore presuppose the existence of the Buddhistic religion. Will Mr. Ráo concede that the division of the Vedas and the remodelling of the Puráṇas took place at about the period when Buddha was born, or that the Mahábhárata as a practical exposition of the Vedic wisdom was an outcome of the age when the non-Vedic Buddhistic movement was threatening to destroy the Brahmanical religion?

164. (viii) Subbá Ráo refers to the distinction made by Mádhavácháryya in his *Tátparyya Nirṇaya* between two classes of works known as the *Nirṇaya Grantha* and the *Nirṇáyaka Grantha*, the former furnishing facts that should be understood as true in themselves and the latter laying down general principles by which these facts may be correctly grasped and interpreted in their true relation. Thus the Bhárata is the foremost work among the first of these two classes, while the Brahmasûtra is the foremost work among the second. While recognizing the authority of the Rgveda, Pañcharátra, Bhárata, original Rámáyana and Brahmasûtra as self-evident, Mádhavácháryya states emphatically that Bhárata is the most explicit and unmistakable expression of truths. We would ask Mr. Ráo how this view of the relation between the Mahábhárata and the Brahmasûtras could be reconciled with his own position that the author of the Epic was so anxious to secure the recognition of this work among the authoritative scriptures of old that he had inserted in the Brahmasûtras some references to his own work under the heading of Smṛti? Moreover, does not the contrast between the Mahábhárata and the Brahmasûtras drawn by Mádhavácháryya as that between works furnishing facts which are true in themselves and works laying down general principles for the



correct understanding of those facts, equally apply to the relation between the narrative part or historical setting and didactic portions of the Epic? As the author of *Tātparyya Nirṇaya* himself admits, "Bhārata is the guide to or standard of all the right conclusions which the several scriptures are intended to teach, these conclusions being illustrated in the Bhārata by reference to the authenticated facts." In other words, according to the views of Mādhavāchāryya the Mahābhārata includes within itself both the concrete facts and general principles, and stands by itself as a self-contained whole and does not need the support of any other apologetic work like the Brahmasūtras, as Mr. Rāo supposes.

165. There is one other significant remark made by Mādhavāchāryya which is worth noticing. According to him, the Bhārata Epic bears a triple interpretation,<sup>1</sup> viz., (1) *Āstika*, or historical, (2) *Manvādi* or moral and religious, and (3) *Uparichara* or transcendental (or metaphorical); e.g., applying the last mode of interpretation, we may regard Bhima, Draupadi, Kauravas and the like as standing for different characters and qualities of men or branches of knowledge. From this point of view the whole Bhārata may be said to bear an ethical interpretation, whether in its historical aspect or any other. Now, accepting this view of Mādhavāchāryya as representative of the orthodox traditional school, are we not justified in holding that the whole of the Epic, including its so-called historical parts, is capable of a purely moral and religious as well as allegorical and philosophical explanation, without reference to any real events of the past history? Nothing could be more helpful to us in understanding the proper significance of the Mahābhārata and in forming a correct notion of its origin than these explicit statements of a great Indian scholar of the twelfth century. The "Āstikādi" interpretation of Mādhavāchāryya which assumes that there are historical foundations for the principal character and incidents of the Epic, and that the historical aspect of the Epic, too, may be studied apart, implies without doubt that even if the didactic portions of the Mahābhārata are altogether excluded or eliminated there will still remain for our treatment the narrative events of the

<sup>1</sup> There is a difference of opinion as to the meaning of the words "Āstika," "Manvādi" and "Uparichara," as Mr. Rāo himself has noted. Some take them to mean theories founded by the sages Āstika, Manu and Uparichara respectively, others (e.g., Vaidya) explain them as referring to three different editions of the Mahābhārata, viz., the works of Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Sauti beginning with the words Āstika, Manu and Uparichara respectively.



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story as a connected whole. But the great old commentator seems to lay greater stress on the *ethical* interpretation of the Epic, and that again under the religious influence of Bhágavatism or Vaiṣṇavism, as we shall see presently. It is remarkable that Bankimchandra and other orthodox scholars have freely applied the third mode of interpretation (i.e., that according to Uparichara or the allegorical one), as they explain all supernatural or miraculous elements in the Mahábhárata and the Puráṇas (especially those relating to the life-history of the Pándavas and Kṛṣṇa and to the incidents of the war) by resorting to metaphorical and symbolical ways of expressing great and deep spiritual thoughts rather than taking them in their literal and superficial meaning. This only confirms our position that the Mahábhárata is not an authentic history, but that poetic exaggerations and imaginative fictions have to a large extent vitiated the grain of facts therein. It may be mentioned that the first chapter of the Gítá with its descriptions of the battle scenes has been interpreted in a spiritual sense even by those who regard it as part of the original Epic.

### SECTION VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS ON MR. SUBBÁ RÁO'S THEORY BEARING ON THE POSITION OF THE GÍTÁ

166. We are perfectly in agreement with Mr. Subbá Ráo's view with regard to the Vedic root of the Mahábhárata as a work on Smṛti or Dharmagrantha (Scripture and Law-book), as an authority on moral, religious and philosophical truths. The orthodox society based on the Vedic religion still regards the Mahábhárata as a fifth Veda. As Mr. Subbá Ráo states, the sanctity and value attached to the Epic Bhárata was in no manner less than that attached to the Vedas, although he has overshot the mark in adding that the only distinction between the regular Vedas and the Bhárata lies in that the former were important by their vocabulary, but the latter was important by its contents, by the wisdom and reliableness of its author, by the genuineness of its guidance to truth. It may also be conceded that according to the Indian tradition Itihásas and Puráṇas are Upa-br̥h̥ṇas, i.e., illustrative exposition of the Vedic knowledge.

167. Again we are not prepared to accept the arbitrary assumption of Mr. Ráo that Bádaráyana, after restoring the Vedas and arranging them into convenient groups, wrote the Itihásas and

the Purāṇas and Brahmasūtras, his grand object being to furnish a key to the traditional knowledge locked up in the Vedas and to make the Vedic wisdom available in a form fit to be grasped both by the common people and by the thoughtful enquirer. But we admit at the same time that Mr. Subbā Ráo has hit upon the guiding principle for a true understanding of the ancient Indian literature in so far as he has aimed at tracing the continuity of the line of development of all our sacred literature, with all the philosophical, religious and ethical ideas contained in them, from their ultimate source and root in the Vedic lore. We may thus concede that all the didactic materials in the Great Epic must be read and explained in the light of the Vedic wisdom and that the Mahābhārata in its present form is nothing more than an appendix to the Vedic religion, as its teachings distinctly bear the traces of Brahmanistic influence—in spite of later foreign accretions of a non-Vedic and even anti-Brahmanic character.

168. We may go further and agree with Mr. Subbā Ráo when he says that the serious interference in considerable portions of the existing Mahābhārata with the spirit of the true Vedic wisdom, which is still the prevailing force in the Epic, is due to the struggle between the two parties—Vedic and non-Vedic—which seems to have been symbolized in the warfare between the Devas and the Asuras, as described in the R̥gveda and philosophized upon in the Upaniṣads, and further elaborated in the Purāṇic stories. For it is quite conceivable, as Mr. Ráo suggests, that there were systems antagonistic to the authority of the Vedas as well as to truths contained therein before and after the restoration of the Vedas, and the loss of the Vedas and Vedic knowledge may be attributed largely to the mischievous interference by the followers of such schools of thought. This view of Mr. Subbā Ráo that the Mahābhārata which was originally a Brahmanistic work and a compendium of Vedic wisdom, was tampered with by foreign authors from time to time is also supported by Holzmann, who surmises that the Epic received its present form in the hands of a Buddhist poet. Now the admission of all these points has an important bearing on our view as to the nature of the Bhagavad-Gītā :

169. (a) While we have maintained, unlike Mr. Subbā Ráo, that the Gītā was a later interpolation in the Mahābhārata and was not an integral part of the original Epic, there is substantial agreement between his view of the Vedic origin of the Mahābhārata

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and our position as to the Upaniṣadic character of the Gîtá. Neither the philosophy nor the religion of the Gîtá justifies us in assuming that this poem of ours originated from a non-Vedic soil or was conceived by an author who was outside the pale of the Vedic society, as the followers of the Bhágavata school and modern scholars like Garbe and Grierson would have us believe. We are, therefore, guarded by hoary traditions in accepting the teachings of both the Mahábhárata and the Bhagavad-Gîtá to be products of the Vedic wisdom. So far we are at one with Mr. Subbá Ráo.

170. (b) If the Mahábhárata is not a unitary whole, if there have been later interpolations of a didactic kind in this great work, then it follows that the Gîtá is not an integral part of the Epic, but a later addition. Granting for the sake of the argument that the Gîtá has always been a part of the Great Epic and is not one of the interpolated texts, we would be justified, on the basis of Mr. Subbá Ráo's admissions, in maintaining that the Gîtá has not altogether escaped from the "errors due to careless transcriptions or to the difficulties in deciphering the originals" or "from the errors arising out of the uncurbed imagination of the intelligent reader or the ignorance of the illiterate scribe." For it is impossible that the Gîtá alone, of all the portions of the Mahábhárata, should have remained free from foreign matter and later topics, which have found their way into the Epic as a whole. In view of the beauty and sublimity of the Divine Song, and the far-reaching influence and wide popularity which it commanded from the earliest times, is it not far more reasonable in theory and far more probable in fact that the Gîtá suffered, like any other part of the Mahábhárata, from sectarian tampering or serious interference at the hands of the people who sought to introduce new matter or suitable changes with a definite purpose of their own? We shall try in the sequel to show how slight modifications and alterations in the ordering of the materials and in the sequence of the verses and even additions of a few lines in some chapters of the Gîtá episode of the present Epic, must have taken place in course of ages. We shall, however, go further than this and maintain that the Gîtá was inserted in the Mahábhárata by some later partisan editors or diaskeuasts, who at the time of incorporating the poem into the Epic made certain changes in its original setting and also perhaps added some verses here and there to gain their sectarian ends.

171. (c) In the light of what Subbá Ráo, following Mádhavá-cháryya, calls the *Uparichara* (i.e., allegorical or metaphorical) interpretation of the Epic, we may do away with the historical setting of the Gîtá and give to it a spiritual explanation. As we have previously remarked, the teachings of the Gîtá were not meant to induce Arjuna to fight, nor have they anything to do with the Kuru-Pándava war, but they are intended to help the human soul in its spiritual battlefield in every age and every country. To take the first chapter of the Bhagavad-Gîtá in its literal meaning and to seek an objective basis for this historical setting in the supposed or real events of a remote antiquity is to miss the true significance of this sublime poem and to narrow the range of its eternal and universal truths by confining the application of its moral and religious lessons to a particular local and temporal field of action, while the poet of the Gîtá certainly intended to preach these lofty truths to all men of all races and to see them realized throughout the whole stage of human life for all ages to come.

172. (d) It is natural that these orthodox scholars, whose regard for truth is limited by their faith in the Divine Incarnation and who read all facts in the light of their theory of a dramatic purpose supposed to have been lying at the bottom of the Epic story, should try and justify the lack of proportion and propriety, and the want of symmetry and harmony in the Great Epic, especially with regard to the discrepancy between its historical setting and didactic form. But even they have been compelled to acknowledge that exposition of didactic truth is the main theme and history comes in as illustrations, and that that history is made very striking, implying that the historical matter, if any, is subordinated to the moral purpose, and even exaggerated to a large extent in order to add to the strikingness of the example. The value of the Gîtá should therefore be sought not so much in its supposed Epic connection or historical association but in its moral and philosophy.

173. Now from the discussion of the views of Mr. C. V. Vaidya and of Mr. Subbá Ráo it follows that there is more than one possible way of viewing the whole question of the origin of the Mahábhárata and the relation between the didactic and the historical portions of the Epic. Three alternative hypotheses seem to suggest themselves at this stage, viz., (i) that before the present Mahá-

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bhárata there may have been originally two separate works or two classes of literature, one concerned with religious, moral and philosophical truths of an abstract and general kind and the other dealing with historical matter—mythical stories and legendary narratives, out of which the author of the Great Epic probably formed a single big treatise by combining these two classes into a connected whole and applying his editorial discretions for such additions as were necessary for the purpose ; or (ii) that the poet himself may have written the narrative portion out of the historical and traditional materials supplied by his age, moulding these in the light of the ideals and experiences of his own, and he may have incorporated some of the moral and philosophical works extant in his age into the framework of the story, mostly retaining their old forms, but dressing them in his own language as far as possible ; or (iii) the whole of the didactic portions may have been added to the original writings of the author of the Epic by later interpolators in subsequent ages with a view to turning the Epic into a Smṛti or Law-book and to elevate it to the rank of the fifth Vedá. Unfortunately we have no means of ascertaining which of these alternatives represents the actual line of the development of the Epic, and whether there may have been other possible varieties of circumstances that led to the evolution of its present form. But whatever may have been the original extent and character of the Epic, however it may have received its present shape, we have found no reasons or circumstances arising out of these controversial topics to shake our previous assumption that the original Epic was not wholly a narrative of historical events or mythical stories, but included didactic lessons as well, and that the original Gītá was not a part of the Mahábhárata, but had an Upaniṣadic character and was later on inserted in the Epic exactly at a place where some didactic elements of similar contents were already found. This brings us to the point where we can profitably discuss the theory of Dahlmann on the genesis of the Mahábhárata, according to which the Epic was from the beginning a text-book of didactic truths.



## CHAPTER V

### GENESIS OF THE MAHÁBHÁRATA: VIEWS OF JOSEPH DAHLMANN DISCUSSED

#### SECTION I. METHOD OF SYNTHETIC CRITICISM—THE EPIC AND THE LAW-BOOK TREATED AS A UNITY

174. Dahlmann's treatment of the Mahábhárata is diametrically opposed to that of Hopkins and others who have followed what Dahlmann calls the method of analytic criticism as distinguished from his own method, synthetic criticism. If Hopkins could not see the forest on account of the trees, Dahlmann seems to miss the trees in the forest. We cannot do better than give the substance of Dahlmann's views in his own words as far as possible. At the conclusion of the first Chapter of Book I dealing with the problem of method in his "Genesis des Mahábhárata," Dahlmann tells us: "Not from the self-contained individual events but from the consideration of the Mahábhárata as a whole must the analysis start if it wants to get a right standard for the judgment of the individual pieces. The special character of the individual has its ground in the genesis of the whole. Hence the critique must be synthetic. As a whole the Mahábhárata should be grasped and investigated and that must remain as the foundation of the task of the Mahábhárata critic. But how is it possible, when the whole falls into a thousand loose fragments?"

175. The answer is supplied by Dahlmann in the second chapter dealing with the method of synthetic criticism, where we are told: "There can be a talk of the 'whole' only where there is unity of parts. Does the Mahábhárata possess in the multiplicity of its materials such a unity, that we can ask about the genesis of the unitary bond without regard for the dissimilarity of that stuff which is united into a whole?"

For the Indians, the Mahábhárata as a whole certainly possesses a close unity in its character as a book of laws and traditions (Smṛti). To them the Epos is a scripture (Śāstra), an encyclopædia

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of the entire sacred wisdom. But what constitutes a whole or a unity of the religious-didactic character for them, is for us divided into wholly dissimilar parts : or shall we assume it to be established that, in the Mahábhárata as we know it, law and poetry are inseparably connected, that the Smṛti portions and the Epic portions form as it were, a chemical combination and are not merely joined together mechanically, that in fact *dharma* or law forms the one uniting and dominating characteristic feature of the Epic element ? A unity would thus be given indeed to the whole, and the problem of the genesis of the Mahábhárata would be answered in the problem of the genesis of the law elements. How did the Epic arise under the dominating influence of the Law ? But is this unity present before us ? Where is the proof for such bold and startling assertions ? It lies in the idea that the Epic presents a battle between the right and the wrong, between Dharma and Adharma, that ends in the triumph of justice. The unifying central point of such unlike pieces is certainly not given. And yet the Epic and the didactic do not lie so foreign to one another and do not by any means form a chaotic mass, as the enthusiasts of an "original Epos" would have us believe. . . . We see how the Mahábhárata binds in full comprehension the properties of a Purána with those of a heroic poem. With the beauty and sublimity of a genuine Epic poem is mixed a deeply impressive fullness of Puránic doctrine. And in this binding together of a poetry and didactic text, the Epic presents a definite and unique self-contained type. The distinguishing and surpassing essence of this type lies in the fusion of religious and poetic elements. It can be recognized in the unity of structure, which comprehends all the elements of a heroic poem and all the features of a sectarian text-book. The Epic is text-book<sup>1</sup> and the text-book is Epic. "Das Epos ist Lehrbuch und das Lehrbuch ist Epos."

176. That which must be regarded as Epic poetry, has taken upon itself a fullness of didactic contents. The teaching element is not as in younger Puráṇas held together through an external bond, but in the indivisible unity of a chiefly Epic work itself, there lies the knitting bond of the didactic material. In this melting together of poetic and teaching element that pervades the

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the "Text-book" as contrasted with the Epic is to be taken in the sense of a teaching or didactic book with moral and religious elements or lessons.

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whole Epic, lies the distinguishing essence, fundamental character of the Mahābhārata. All actual or supposed contradictions of religion and law, of morality and language have their roots in this. If we want to know the source of the "contradiction" we must seek for those influences that lead to the melting process of poetic and didactic elements. The problem of the genesis of the Mahābhārata lies in the problem of its double character of an Epic and text-book. Why is the poetry instructive in its dominant tendency and why is the Epic the bearer of religious elements? This question forms the pivot of research.

177. From the genesis of an original "real Epic" people used to try to discover the way to Smṛti, or to the pseudo-Epic. In the assumption that the Epic as the original product was preceded by a poem, the critic, as in the case of Hopkins, vigorously set himself to the task of getting the original elements of the story and the poem.

The problems for such critics are: when and by whom did the story-cycle receive its artistic form in the unity of a heroic poem? Under what influences did the poem form itself into a text-book? It is the fundamental error of this method that it places the hard task of investigation in the genesis of the poetry and not in that of the text-book.

### SECTION II. THE EPIC AS BASED ON KṚṢṆĀRJUNA CULT

(Pāṇini and Barth)

178. Dahlmann supports himself by the conclusions arrived at by Barth with regard to the Mahābhārata from the data supplied by Pāṇini, viz., (i) that Pāṇini knew the Pāṇdu story as the kernel and basic story of a poem, (ii) that the Pāṇdava legends received a decidedly poetic form in the shape of an epic, (iii) that this poetic handling of the story known through our Epic had a predominantly religious-didactic tendency, the literary product was the Epic as a text-book, (iv) the whole was already at that time known under the name of Mahābhārata. This implies a concession that the Mahābhārata as known by Pāṇini in the third century B.C. and the Mahābhārata as referred to in the inscriptions of the third century A.D. are essentially identical not only as regards the kernel and the basic story (i.e., the war of the Pāṇdavas for overlordship) but also as regards the distinctly Purāṇic type.

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The story is worked up into epic poetry and the epic poem follows on the whole a teaching and sectarian tendency. The creative art known as the Mahábhárata neither possesses the older Puránic type of an over-rulingly epic poem, as it stands essentially in the service of religious-sectarian teaching. Nor does it show the young Puránic type of a teaching-book that keeps outwardly the form of an epic dialogue, without possessing the features of an epic. The Mahábhárata of Páṇiṇi has for its ground-plan the heroic element, a genuine national event. The Mahábhárata of Páṇiṇi distinguishes itself from the older and younger Puráṇas by its belonging to the intermediate type of the Epic as a text-book.

179. Following Barth, Dahlmann maintains that the Epic serves in explicit tendency the end of Viṣṇu and Śiva cult, of which Bhakti formed the central point. Bhakti carries with it a sectarian character throughout as it is closely knitted with the cult of Viṣṇu and Śiva. It is the fundamental feature of the Viṣṇuite and Śivaite religious teachings. The element of Bhakti, admitted by Barth, is nothing else than Viṣṇuite (and Śivaite) religious teaching. With the Epic stuff are bound accordingly texts which, though not identical with, were yet similar to those texts which have been transmitted in explicitly sectarian Puráṇas or religious-legendary and religious-philosophical texts.

180. Thus, according to Dahlmann, the mythology of gods culminated in the worship of Viṣṇu and Śiva. The theogonic and cosmogonic legends were worked out in the spirit of popular cults. Again Bhakti developed itself scientifically on the basis of the philosophy of Sāṅkhya or Yoga, and so there are Yoga sections which teach on the inner essence of divinity of Brahman and Átman, on their relation to the world-all, on men and soul in the essence of mystic unity. In other words, the Mahábhárata of Páṇiṇi contained religio-philosophical documents like the texts of the Bhagavad-Gítá, the Anugítá, and theogonic and cosmogonic discussions which were similar to those contained in the present third and fifth, the twelfth and the thirteenth Parvas of the Epic ; the Mahábhárata was at the age of Páṇiṇi only known as Smṛti.

181. Dahlmann confirms the same conclusion by a consideration of the compound Kṛṣṇárjuna, as the fact of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna forming an inseparable duality proves the existence of the poem as the bearer of sectarian elements. If according to Barth there is an evidence in the dual Kṛṣṇárjuna that the Epic served a



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sectarian purpose, according to Dahlmann it also affords us a proof of the unity of the heroic and sectarian elements in such a Mahābhārata. Such a Mahābhārata, however, is not essentially different from the present one, which, as it worships Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in their divine identity, is expressly subservient to sectarian Bhakti. Thus the religious-didactic character of the Epic has remained essentially the same in 400 B.C. and A.D. 400. The poem was and is still a teaching book. All evidences lead to the conclusion that the Epic was a Smṛti as early as the fifth century B.C., as is also admitted by Jacobi.

182. We may thus reduce Dahlmann's theory as to the nature of the Epic into three simple propositions, viz.: (i) The Mahābhārata of to-day as it has come down to us from A.D. 400, the Mahābhārata of 100,000 verses mentioned by the ancient inscriptions, is essentially the same as it was in the days of Pāṇini about 400 B.C. (2) It has always combined the Pāṇdu story with the didactic elements and been recognized from the first as a *Smṛti*, so that poetry and law, the materials of the narrative story and the elements of philosophical and religious teachings were not originally separate and independent parts which were later on joined together mechanically or brought into a chemical fusion, but had been contained in the Epic from the beginning. (3) The central thread of connection between the epic and the didactic parts was supplied by the sectarian devotion to Kṛṣṇa, the God, and Arjuna, the hero, combined into a mystic unity.

183. Now we have already seen how Mr. C. V. Vaidya and other Indian scholars have suspected a considerable portion of the didactic Mahābhārata (e.g., the Sāntiparva and the Anusāsana-parva) to be later interpolations, and how they have proved with cogent reasons and abundant materials supplied by the Mahābhārata itself that the Epic has passed through various successive editions (e.g., in the hands of Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Sauti) and undergone radical changes in its character with each stage of its development. In the face of such strong reasons and unassailable facts we do not see how Dahlmann's contention that the Mahābhārata at the time of Pāṇini was already recognized as an Epic and a Smṛti, as a comprehensive poetical account of the story of the Kuru-Pāṇḍava war and at the same time a systematic exposition of the cult of Bhakti under the sectarian influence of the worship of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as hero-gods, can be established



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on the insufficient data supplied by the "Aṣṭādhyāyī" of that renowned Grammarian of the fourth or fifth century B.C. Nor are we convinced that the duality of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna found in Pāṇini and the Mahābhārata implies the deification and the identification of these two heroes or the unification of two cults which have Vāsudeva and Arjuna as supreme objects of worship.

184. The origin and growth of the Kṛṣṇa cult and the development of sectarian tendencies, appeared much later in the history of the Bhakti movement in India ; and the identification of Kṛṣṇa with the supreme God, in the form of Viṣṇu or Brahma, took place long after the composition of the Gītā and certainly at a later stage of the evolution of the Bhārata Epic. As regards Dahlmann's assumption of a supposed Arjuna cult having been associated with the worship of Kṛṣṇa, there is neither historical evidence nor scriptural authority in ancient Indian literature for the existence of such a sect which deified Arjuna along with Kṛṣṇa and we must treat it as a pure fiction or creation of fancy on the part of this learned scholar. As Bhándárkar, Bankimchandra and Vaidya have maintained, the element of the glorification of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva in the Mahābhārata is itself a later phase and has undergone several stages of transformation in course of the development of the Epic, and if we look a little closely into the matter, there are not signs wanting in the present Epic itself that Kṛṣṇa appeared at first as an ordinary human being, then occupied the rank of a great hero and statesman and gradually became elevated to the divine rank, till he was finally identified with the supreme God, Viṣṇu or Brahma. None of these reputed scholars of India have noticed in the Epic any trace of the peculiar characteristic discovered by Dahlmann, viz., the glorification of Arjuna amounting to a bestowal of divine honours on him, nor have they recognized in the association of Kṛṣṇa with Arjuna anything so extraordinarily significant as to justify us in assuming that a "Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna cult" or the sectarian Bhakti towards these two heroes was the kernel of the Epic and the connecting link between its narrative and its didactic elements.

185. It is noteworthy that Bankimchandra, who found in the grammar of Pāṇini materials enough to prove that the Mahābhārata was at the time known as the history of the Pándavas and who also believed that at the time of the composition of the Sūtras of Pāṇini, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were already recognized as gods, still maintained that Kṛṣṇa, who was in the first stage of the Epic an

ordinary mortal, was deified only when the Epic passed through the second edition and received many philosophical and religious interpolations. Thus even if it were true that Pāṇini knew a Mahābhārata Epic which was built on the Pāṇḍava story and in which Kṛṣṇa was already recognized as an object of worship and of which the element of sectarian Bhakti towards Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna formed the most prominent and the central feature, as Dahlmann infers, that would not preclude the possibility of an original Mahābhārata independent of all these sectarian and Kṛṣṇaite elements, nor militate against the reality of a stage of development in the Epic, when most of the didactic portions were not as yet added to it, for we may conceive such an earlier stage of the Epic or such an original Bhārata having existed long before the age of Pāṇini. Moreover, Dahlmann himself speaks of development of the Epic Mahābhārata in spite of his conception of the unitary character of the Mahābhārata as poetry and text-book from its very origin.

186. We are inclined to admit that Dahlmann was right in his polemic against the theory of Hopkins and others who speak of a threefold development of the great Epic in three different successive stages, viz., the Epic as a story, the Epic as poetry and the Epic as text-book. As against the view that there existed at first purely a story of the battle of Pāṇḍavas, that this story-cycle was then given an artistic form in the unity of a heroic poem by a later author, and that this poem was finally given the character of a religious-didactic text-book, Dahlmann rightly urges that this method of the treatment of the Epic, progressing from the genesis of the kernel of the story to the poetry, from the poetry to the text-book, is falsely called historical on the plea that it seeks for the "becoming," i.e., the genetic building up of the particular stories, and all history is becoming. But such a genetic method would be according to Dahlmann just unhistorical, for the first condition of historical criticism is that we seek firm hold on the given facts in order to proceed from the known to the unknown; while the method in question goes from the unknown to the unknown in so far as it lays as its basis the wholly unknown "original poem" and construes out of it a metamorphosis into the text-book. As against this unhistorical procedure, Dahlmann claims to find the solution of the Mahābhārata problem in its double-sided character of poetry and text-book by following the historical method which starts only from the given fact, viz., that

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the Mahábhárata presents to us a heroic poem as the custodian and messenger of religious wisdom.

187. But while considering all this and admitting with this learned scholar that from the beginning the Epic was text-book and the text-book was an Epic and that there were didactic elements in the original Mahábhárata, we are not prepared to admit that the Bhárata Epic was Kṛṣṇaite in character or based on the sectarian doctrines of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna cult from its origin, nor that all the didactic episodes of the present Mahábhárata like the Bhagavad-Gítá, the Anugítá, the Sanatsujátiya and all the sections of the Śántiparva and Anuśāsanaparva were naturally linked up with the Pándu Epic in its primitive form at the earliest stage of the literary history of India. For as we have remarked, differences in style and language, in philosophical and religious thoughts, make it impossible to imagine that all the didactic episodes of the Mahábhárata were products of the same age or formed integral parts of the Epic in all its stages.

188. Unfortunately the present stage of our Mahábhárata researches—although it is now nearly fifty years since the first edition of Dahlmann's *Genesis of the Mahábhárata* was published—does not entitle us to determine the exact chronology of the various parts of the great Epic, nor to define precisely the historical relationship between the story portion and the didactic materials of this monumental work of the Hindus, but this much at least is certain, and seems to be admitted by all critics and historians, that the work as a whole has suffered from interpolations in the hands of religiously disposed editors of various types, and that many of its episodes are older than the Epic as a whole, being incorporated by later sectarian diaskeuasts in the interests of their own religious propaganda. Dahlmann has naturally concerned himself more with the Epic in its totality than with its individual episodes, but had he applied his historical criticism and synthetic method to the various parts of the Epic and examined these latter with as great care in their minutest details, he would have discovered that there is an element of truth in the views of his opponents, and that the golden mean lies in the common meeting-ground of the various divergent lines of thought followed by different scholars.

189. Taking for the sake of illustration, the case of the Bhagavad-Gítá, with which we are directly and immediately concerned, we may recognize the truth of Dahlmann's dictum that the "Epic

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was text-book and the text-book was Epic," in so far as the original Epic must have contained some reflections or didactic passages or sections, whether in the shape of a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna or in some other form appropriate to the occasion of the war, as Holzman also surmises, and yet Bankimchandra, Hopkins and others may be right in considering the episode of the Bhagavad-Gītā as an interpolation which the later editors added to the Bhārata Epic. Indeed, Dahlmann himself concedes as much and suggests similar lines of development and modes of interpolation, when he speaks of the relation between the Epic and the episodes, and we must now turn to his views on this important problem.

### SECTION III. THE RELATION BETWEEN THE EPIC AND THE EPISODES

*(The bond of unity supplied by the art of rhapsody with an educative mission)*

190. Dahlmann could not help asking the question: "How has it come about that a genuine Epos not only contains so many references to Śāstra elements, but also has become just the meeting point of such a comprehensive mass of didactic materials, as is contained in the numerous episodes? That which gives to the Mahābhārata its encyclopædic character is the fullness of Upākhyānas or episodes which are bound up with the Ākhyānas or Epos. What genetic relation have the Epos and the episodes to one another? Dahlmann devotes a whole section of his work to the solution of this problem. He is, of course, fully conscious that Ludwig and others have denied the unity of connection between the Epos and the episodes. How could we succeed in proving that the Epos together with all (or almost all) Upākhyānas rightly forms a unity? This can be done if we formulate the connection between the Epos and Smṛti in some such propositions as the following: (i) The Epos is a rightly constituted unity. (ii) The parts of the Epic are self-consciously (purposely) and deliberately incorporated with one another. (iii) This unity has been conceived and realized by a single individual. (iv) Expansion of the Epic through a successive addition of parts or through interpolations is impossible.

In two ways can the proof of unity be given, viz., that no part is foreign to the whole and that every part serves the purpose of the whole. But with such a general form of criticism we do not



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get a standard of judging the genesis of Epos and Smṛti. It must be shown that everything, as it is, must have been so, the parts are collectively and singly necessary ; and outside the whole, they could not have a self-standing existence. It must be shown that every such ingredient, where it is introduced, is expected and is a necessity and does not go beyond it. Only thus can the real inner dependence of the episodes on the main work be established.

191. If the problem to be solved by the inner critic is to show the unity of genesis, then no documents, however highly artistic, can prove the inner interconnection. There are wholly independent stories of such extent that the Epos proper recedes in the background in reference to them. The means stands out of all proper relation to the end to be attained. And certainly when we place the mass of episodes against the Epos and its artistic unity, and view them apart from every other object, we must say that the didactic elements have nothing to do with the Epos. In the artistic end, which the Epos as such follows, there is nothing that demands or inwardly justifies the pieces inserted. When therefore it is only the æsthetico-poetic end of an Epos that binds the creative art of the editor of the Mahábhárata, the didactic element stands in no relation thereto.

192. But the question still remains to be solved : Was the æsthetico-poetic end the sole and exclusive goal of the poetry ? Or could not the poet connect with the artistic end also a didactic one ?

Now, none will go so far as to maintain that it is unthinkable that from the remote past a religious-didactic end was bound up with an amusing or entertaining one. On the contrary, it lies in the character of the old Epic poetry that it was the bearer of religion and moral ideas of the people. While it amuses, it also teaches. The old epic poetry of the Indians stood in closest relation to religion. To the Epos the instructive character was to a certain extent always appropriate. But in the Mahábhárata the didactic element assumes a quite different position. . . . Against the unity of the theme, the didactic material presents itself as a mass of heterogeneous products. There are fragmentary teachings heaped up without plan or method, aimless and pedantic, which confuse one through their inner lack of connection and want of balance. One is inclined to deny that such a stuff could lie in the ground-plan of the poetry. As Ludwig supposed, " We must assume a



poet who destroys successively the impression of the unity of his own work." But the same learned scholar is pressed to ask the question: "How is it that by the side of the great complexity of mechanism we find such purposive order among the parts which fit in so exactly with one another, that one finds the contradiction more in the scent (appearance) than as consisting in facts? The technique of this complex mechanism presupposes practice. In one hit it could not succeed. The technique of the Mahābhārata rests on the technique of the Epic art of the age."

193. We can speak of an inner and organic relation of the Epic narrative and didactic elements, if they serve the collective purpose of the Rhapsody. For, what do we understand by organic? Organic parts are such elements which connect themselves to a higher common end and work together in dependence on that. Now, does the teaching tendency lie within the remotest end of the narrative art? If the didactic element lies outside the end of the Epic, there can be no talk of organic connection. It serves a purpose with which Rhapsody has nothing to do. If the religious instruction lies within the goal of the Epic, then the teaching material binds itself with the epic element into a common higher end which is based on the educative mission of the Rhapsody. Both elements are organically linked, in so far as both become organs of a higher common purpose. Rhapsody is the educator of the people. Out of it flows the fullness of religious-philosophical and religious-juristic knowledge through the mediating stream of epic narration to the wider mass of the people. The teaching and the amusing tendencies embrace one another. In the Rhapsody of the age flow together poetry and instruction, epos and law, the entire wealth of representation. Poetic art and religious teaching melt in the recitation of the old legends into a picture, in which the people find expressed their own religious and moral life and the ideal of their actions. It can then no longer be said that the didactic sections and the mass of narrative materials are outwardly and arbitrarily joined. Education based on the Śāstra forms an essential part of the task which was placed before the Rhapsody. Individually the justification of the inserted piece may remain wholly external, in so far as the Epos does not need the Upākhyānas at all; it presents without them, too, outwardly and inwardly a self-contained peaceful unity.

194. Measured according to this standard, the Upākhyānas

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do not stand in a distinct relation of dependence on the Epic. An inner interconnection is not given, if it is asked whether the Upákhyaṇa works harmoniously and answers to its goal, in respect of the extent and the content, absolutely in itself and relatively with reference to the surrounding (context) in which it is brought. But if the Rhapsody served an epic-didactic end and was directed towards the combination of the fullness of narrative and didactic materials in an entire picture, then one no longer asks whether the Upákhyaṇa has its justification in this or that place. It has its justification in the total plan of the poetry, which binds the instructive purpose with the æsthetic end. The pieces are inwardly interconnected, because they are founded on the end and the facts. Thereby the circumstance, that many sections carry a fully independent character and with all their greatness do not at all stand in any relation to the chief theme, matters not in the least.

195. The Epic was an encyclopædia of the entire wealth of sacred wisdom that had existed before the Mahábhārata united the manifold elements into the totality of a picture. It was a school of religious education. The Mahábhārata is certainly the product of a historical process, but of a process, which generally attained consummation in the wider circle of the Epic art, so that our poetry as perfected into a text-book only appears likewise as the final product of an antecedent development. The history of Rhapsody is the history of Mahábhārata. The metamorphosis of the Epos to the text-book is founded on a general inner transformation of Rhapsody from a sharply epic-narrative character to a religious-didactic one. . . . If the cyclic Rhapsody were the messenger and the carrier of the entire Purāṇa treasures, then it could also be the creator of the Mahábhārata as an Epos and text-book.

196. With regard to the question how the Rhapsody could so interweave the religious-didactic materials with the epic story of the Pándavas that the poem became text-book and the text-book a poem after the Purāṇic type, Dahlmann answers as follows :

As the artistic technique gave unity to the gigantic materials, it assumed in the contemporary plan of poetry the same purposes which were proper to the contemporary Rhapsody. These ends were directed towards all-sided education. Rhapsody first worked

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out the old stories into the chief work of the Epic. . . . These are pieces of old stories, which the Mahābhārata brings into relation with the Pāndavas, in order to incorporate them into the collected works, and indeed in such a way that they may be interwoven with the experiences of the chief heroes. The poetry fashioned the Epic work out of existing materials after older models. The heroic undertakings in "Digvijaya" (the conquest of the world), and religious wanderings of "tīrthayātra" (pilgrimage) run parallel. They are sections of originally independent works. . . . So the history of the sorrows, the war, and the victories of the Pāndavas made up the threads on which, according to the cyclic fashion, story after story is linked.

Through Epos and episodes are drawn descriptions which only a Rhapsody familiar with the art of poetry could offer. It does not however contradict the artistic excellence of the entire poem, when many pieces gain an expansion and detail, "which stands out of all relation to the importance that attaches to the respective pieces." Whoever casts his glance only on the isolated situation, which is taken as motive for incorporation, may say the means are out of all proportion to the end. But not from an outer standpoint, but from the standpoint of the creative Rhapsody must the question of suitability (purposiveness) be decided, and then nothing can be regarded as foreign addition, which is not foreign to the Rhapsody itself. Rhapsody was, however, the vehicle of the entire wealth of religious and legendary tradition.

197. Is the mixture of Epic and didactic elements a unique characteristic of the Mahābhārata? Or is the Mahābhārata not rather the product of a Rhapsody which under the influence of Smṛti generally connected the teaching element with the poetical? The outer critique leads us to the historical picture of the Rhapsody, to the historical relation which binds the Epos and Smṛti to the common end before there was a Mahābhārata Smṛti. According to Dahlmann historically the Rhapsody is the custodian and mediator of the religious-philosophical and religious-legal knowledge. The Rhapsody as the mediator of Dharma-Śāstra and Yoga-Śāstra, this is the historical character of the epic art, which blossomed as the Mahābhārata arose. That is shown by those numerous *Itihāsa* documents, which the 12th and the 13th Books preserve. Thus if the Mahābhārata as a whole has taken up the teaching elements in the widest sense into the poetry, it can only be the

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product of the Rhapsody which stands on the basis of Smṛti as represented by the 12th and 13th Parvas. The Mahábhárata as Epic (i.e., as the poetical construction of stories, with the interweaving or transformation of many Ákhyánas) lies wholly in the province of that Śástra which forms the basic element of the exclusively didactic Itihása parts. The influence of the Śástra is a characteristic of the whole Epic. Only a Rhapsody, which stood in closest connection with the Śástra, could shape the Mahábhárata as poetry in the way it binds to-day the Śástra element with the Epic element. Indeed, it must have been one and the same Rhapsody which created alike the Epos and Smṛti. It is that Rhapsody which became the meeting-point of religion and saving knowledge, the centre of a higher education for the ruling classes, founded on Dharma and Mokṣa.

198. We may notice the difference of standpoint between this German scholar on the one hand and orthodox Indian scholars like Subbá Ráo and Tilak on the other with regard to the treatment of the Mahábhárata. Dahlmann nowhere speaks of the unity of authorship for the Epic and the episodes, nor does he maintain that the didactic materials in the episodes were all composed by the same hand or even at the same age, as he admits that older works have been brought into relation with the Epic text. We must lend every support to his genetic-historical account of the growth of the Epic under the influence of the religious-didactic motive, and to his view of the inner unity of the Epic and the episodes as a product of the Rhapsodic art directed towards the end of educating the people, although the mass of legends and didactic episodes assume a proportion and magnitude that can hardly be justified from the poetical and artistic standpoint. We are even prepared to accept his hypothesis that cycles of stories, which had centred round the heroes Ráma, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna from the earliest times, were threaded on to the Epic framework, and also that sectarian interests had much to do with the addition of many an episode of older origin.

### SECTION IV. FINAL OBSERVATIONS ON DAHLMANN'S THEORY. THE GÎTÁ AND THE MAHÁBHÁRATA

199. There are, however, one or two important points in Dahlmann's theory, on which we must make some observations



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as they have a direct bearing on the problem we are dealing with, viz., the relation between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata.

(i) Dahlmann admits that the episodes of the Mahābhārata exercise little or no influence on the action of the Epos, and only in some cases, if at all, are they vitally connected with the Epic events so as to alter the course of action. Mostly the episodes come by the back door, as it were, and leave the field without producing any effect on the Epic scene. Thus we can take away most of the episodes without creating any perceptible gap in the Epic, and the effect of their removal will be to lighten the burden of the story and to relieve the readers. Now, does this circumstance not favour our theory that episodes after episodes have been added to the Epic from time to time in a very loose connection, and that much may have been altered or even omitted by later editors? As a matter of fact, Dahlmann himself has remarked, agreeing with Ludwig, that in the case of the Bhagavad-Gītā or of the acquisition of divine weapons by Arjuna, the episodes are introduced in a most external and laborious manner, so that if they are taken away, the effect will be in no way damaging to the whole.

Here in any case it is conceded that the Gītā does not fit in very well with the Epic and need not be taken as an integral part of the Mahābhārata.

200. (ii) Dahlmann also recognizes that many sections of the Epic bear a wholly independent character and do not at all stand in any relation to the chief theme, although they are otherwise excellent in themselves. Among such sections are mentioned, for example, the Bhagavad-Gītā and the story of Nala and Damayanti, both of which are considered to have an independent value of their own, but are linked with the Epos only through an external circumstance, their relation to the principal Epic subject being a secondary one. Dahlmann even goes further and says with Ludwig that "at least it can be suspected that the episode is not the work of the same man who has incorporated it into his writings." The Bhagavad-Gītā and Nalopākhyāna arose independently of the Mahābhārata. They may have been partly modified, but their fundamental character has been preserved. Notwithstanding, they can be closely connected with the purpose of the poetry which intended in the picture of the Epos to adapt the entire wealth of moral and religious education to a wider population. What could be more explicit than this statement for the confirmation



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of our views, that the Gítá was an independent treatise of the pre-Epic stage, which was later on appropriated by the editor of the Epic and modified or altered to some extent in course of this incorporation, although its fundamental character remains as it was in its origin ?

201. (iii) The origin of the Epic as text-book is founded, according to this scholar, on the fundamental character of Rhapsody as the custodian and messenger of sacred knowledge. In support of his view of the Rhapsodic art, to which the Mahábhárata itself owes its origin, he cites certain episodes as apt illustrations : viz., historical-didactic fragments contained in the 12th and 13th books of the Epic as well as the mass of legends of the 3rd and 5th books. These parts, as is admitted by Dahlmann, rest on old materials and bear the stamp of ready-made and completed poems. The Mahábhárata in its episodic and didactic sections goes back to older discourses. For instance, Tîrthayátrá and Márkaṇḍeya Parva sections present us legends which, in spite of isolated changes here and there, have been received essentially in the same form in which they were found in the older sources. We may extend the same principle in the case of the Bhagavad-Gítá as well, for it must have been a ready-made and finished poem before it was inserted in the present Epic and has still retained its characteristic form in spite of minor modifications of an isolated kind. We may thus join with Dahlmann when he claims that the episodic and the didactic stuff of the Mahábhárata presents a Rhapsodic literature which is older as compared with the total form of the present Mahábhárata lying before us and that this stuff existed once by itself without direct relation to the chief material of the Epic. We would simply add that the Bhagavad-Gítá is certainly one such didactic episode, which had once existed by itself as an Upaniṣadic text before it was connected with the Epic story.

202. (iv) Another significant remark of Dahlmann also adds to the strength of our position. If the present Mahábhárata was preceded by the Bhárata-Kathá, Bhárata-Ákhyána, etc., and if the editors of the present Epic united numerous stories and philosophical-religious pieces like the 12th and 13th Books to these original frameworks, as Dahlmann maintains, we are justified in viewing the Bhagavad-Gítá as one of the episodes of the philosophical-religious type, which was not contained in the original Bhárata, but was rather at first an independent text and later on

incorporated into the Mahābhārata by its editors along with other didactic texts like the Śāntiparva.

203. (v) According to this learned indologist, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna make up in their epic-religious unity a fundamental element of the present Mahābhārata. Kṛṣṇa is in the whole epic not less God than a hero. One cannot speak of an *older* part, in which Kṛṣṇa appeared still as the old hero of the stories, and younger parts, in which he is the sectarian incarnation of Brahma. This epic-mystic relation receives its sublimest expression in the Bhagavad-Gītā. In form, the Bhagavad-Gītā is a "Samvāda" quite after the fashion of those philosophical dialogues, designated as *Itihāsa*, offered by Book XII. It belongs to that legend-cycle which built itself around Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna under the influence of Yoga-idea. This philosophical dialogue, which linked itself on the names of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, was assimilated in the genuine Epic element along with the Kṛṣṇa cult which had a sectarian colour and it was interpolated into that section which opens the decisive war, so that the poetic representation of wars and triumphs raises itself on the basis of that religious-philosophical wisdom, of which the Rhapsody had become the custodian.

In this passage of Dahlmann's work there is contained a kernel of truth behind the husk of fictitious ideas.

204. He has virtually conceded that the Gītā was originally an independent work and later on assimilated in the genuine Epic element and interpolated into that section which opens the decisive war. But he is wrong in supposing that this poem of ours belonged to that legend-cycle which built itself around Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna under the influence of the Yoga-idea, for although Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna are the speakers, there is nothing peculiarly Kṛṣṇaite and Arjunite in the present Gītā, nor could there be anything of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna story-cycles in the original Gītā, which, as we shall see, was of the nature of an Upaniṣadic treatise.

205. We admit that the insertion of the Gītā in the Epic was due to the sectarian influence of the Kṛṣṇa cult and was probably facilitated by the fact that the original Gītā in its Upaniṣadic form was a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, whose names were associated with the heroic poem, known as the Mahābhārata Epic, and also by the fact that the dialogue of the Gītā resembled to some extent the "samvādas" or *Itihāsa* contained in the 12th Book of the Mahābhārata. But we fail to discover any epic-mystic

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relation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, who are both represented mainly in their human character. For, the verses speaking of the divine character of Kṛṣṇa may be regarded either as interpolations or are capable of a symbolical interpretation. As a man does Kṛṣṇa act in the capacity of a charioteer of Arjuna, as a human friend does he scold or advise the latter, as a human thinker or guide is he received by Arjuna, who once complains that Kṛṣṇa's words make confusions worse confounded (G. III. 1). Similarly, Arjuna in the present Gītā is still a human hero, a weak mortal overwhelmed with grief at the sight of his blood-relations in the battle-field, and there is nothing divine about him, except that he was blessed with the spiritual vision wherewith he could see the divine form pervading the whole universe, which is more symbolical than real. There is no sign in the Gītā of these two heroes possessing any divine unity, nor any trace of their mystic identification with Nara and Nārāyaṇa, as is maintained in other parts of the Epic, nor even of their association with the God Indra or the Indra-Myth, as held by Dahlmann.

206. The root-error of Dahlmann's is, however, to be found in his conception of the Kṛṣṇaite character of the Epic and of the Gītā. He is here following no doubt the traditional idea of the Mahābhārata as current in India, but most of the modern scholars have outgrown this traditional notion and accepted the more reasonable and historical view of the case, according to which the position of Kṛṣṇa is not identical in the different parts of the Mahābhārata, and has perceptibly developed from the human to the divine rank in the various stages of the genesis of the Epic. A discerning reader will clearly recognize that the Gītā in its genuine doctrines does not preach the Kṛṣṇa cult, nor serve the end of sectarian Bhakti, as imagined by this Indianist, but is a purely non-sectarian text-book of spiritual culture, based on a spirit of Universalism, and catholicity, and teaching the best means of harmonizing Yoga, Bhakti, and Jñāna according to the highest ideal of the Upaniṣadic age. Whatever Kṛṣṇaite elements are to be found in the Gītā are due to the form it has received from the Vaiṣṇava editors of the Mahābhārata, who imparted a certain amount of sectarian colouring to this Upaniṣadic text in keeping with the spirit of the whole Epic, at the time when they incorporated the Gītā into the Epic.

207. (vi) Dahlmann has exposed himself to the charge of a

logical fallacy in relating the Kṛṣṇa-cycle to the Epic in its earliest stage. He tells us that the cyclic stories of Kṛṣṇa and Rāma had been prevalent independently of and prior to the origin of the Mahābhārata, since the remotest period of Sanskrit literature, and that the editors of the Mahābhārata had subsequently added these stories to the Epic by connecting them with the events and experiences in the lives of Pāṇḍava heroes and at the same time modifying them to some extent in the light of the character of the Epic, and yet he holds inconsistently that the Arjuna-cycle and the Pāṇḍuite Epic were given a Kṛṣṇaite character by the editors of the Mahābhārata. We are at a loss to understand whether the Pāṇḍuite version of the Epic was the earlier, to which the Kṛṣṇaite character was given at a later stage, or whether the Kṛṣṇaite element was already predominant in the Epic and the Arjuna-myth was only a later development coloured by Kṛṣṇa cult. Evidently, this learned scholar is guilty of a *petitio principii* in so far as he proves the original Kṛṣṇaite character of the Mahābhārata by reference to the relation of the Pāṇḍavas, especially of Arjuna, to Kṛṣṇā in the present Epic, and yet proves the divine character of the Epic hero, Arjuna, by reference to the supposed original unity of the Kṛṣṇa-Arjuna cult and the dominance of the sectarian Bhakti towards Kṛṣṇa in the original Epic. Had he been aware of moving in this vicious circle, he would certainly have offered an explanation, as he has done in the case of proving the Rhapsodic unity of the Epic element and the Śāstra element, or of the narrative and the didactic materials in the oldest Mahābhārata by reference to the character of certain episodes in the present Mahābhārata itself (viz., the 12th and 13th Books), a procedure which on his own admission has the appearance of a *petitio principii*.

As we have said before, all this fallacious reasoning could have been avoided, had he freed his mind from the bias or prepossession in favour of the Kṛṣṇa cult and recognized that the original Gītā, as well as the original Mahābhārata, was composed before the origin of the sectarian worship of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.

208. (vii) Notwithstanding our differences from Dahlmann on these important points, we are glad to accord our hearty support to the following elements of his theory: viz., (i) That the age of the origin of the Epic story and its moral, philosophical and religious teachings was not far removed from the Vedic times (including



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the period of the Bráhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas), and that the root of the narrative as well as didactic portions of the Mahábhárata must be sought in the Vedic literature—a view which is entirely in agreement with our contention as to the Upaniṣadic origin and character of the Bhagavad-Gítá. (ii) That the art of reconciling poetry and philosophy, of combining the amusing and the educative functions and blending the narrative story and sublime moral lessons in an indissoluble synthesis and harmony, has always been a characteristic of the early Indian literature, and that the Mahábhárata owes its Epic-didactic unity to this splendid trait or divine blessing with which the ancient thinkers of our land were endowed, a concession which secures to the Gítá all the beauty and grandeur of a philosophical poem with an ethical fervour and religious depth and spiritual elevation, even in its original form. (iii) That the Epic Mahábhárata has attained its encyclopædic bulk by successfully and successively incorporating into itself the vast store of ancient wisdom scattered in the Vedic literature and in the Purána legends and myths with a view to making the highest mode of culture and the best means of salvation widely accessible to the illiterate masses of India through the art of rhapsody, an end which accounts for the character of the Epic as Smṛti or authoritative text-book on law and morals and also for the educative influence of the Mahábhárata on succeeding generations of Hindu sages and statesmen up to the present day. This view of the Epic not only confirms our proposition that the Bhagavad-Gítá was originally an ethico-religious philosophical poem with its root in the Upaniṣadic age, but also explains why it was later on inserted in the body of the Mahábhárata as a didactic episode. (iv) Lastly, that the Mahábhárata has retained its Epico-didactic character (with a sectarian colouring added to it later on under the influence of the Kṛṣṇa cult) from an early age.

209. Thus our examination of the views of Tilak and Dahlmann enables us to separate the grains of truth from the husk of error in their theories. Both Tilak and Dahlmann are right to some extent, the former in so far as he conceives of the present Mahábhárata as based on the first and original Epic, but with copious additions, and the latter in so far as he holds that the Epic was a text-book from the beginning and received didactic episodes from time to time to suit the purposes of the Rhapsody, under the influence of which the Epic story and the Epic morals and



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philosophy developed in the first instance. But none of them have been able to determine the essential nature of the Bhagavad-Gītā in its original form and its true relation to the present Mahābhārata, and both of them have wrongly and inconsistently enough sought to read into the Mahābhārata no less than into the Gītā the influence of the Bhāgavata religion or Kṛṣṇa cult, and in this they have not only been untrue to the historical order of development of the religious literature of India, but also to the essential spirit and the fundamental teachings of the Bhagavad-Gītā.

## CHAPTER VI

### UPANIṢADIC ORIGIN OF THE GĪTĀ

#### SECTION I. THE ORIGINAL GĪTĀ AS AN UPANIṢADIC TEXT

210. As to the question whether the Gītā formed a genuine part of the Mahābhārata or was a later interpolation, Mr. Telang had noticed that the alternatives for us to choose from are not only two, that the section in question (i.e., the Gītā) may be a genuine part of the work (i.e., the Mahābhārata), or that it may be a later interpolation, but also that the section may have been in existence at the date of the original Epic as an independent treatise and then incorporated by the Epic editor into his own production. But while admitting all these possible alternatives, Telang shrank from examining their grounds with sufficient industry and boldness, and accepted the orthodox and traditional view rather uncritically with these remarks: "Possibly the Gītā may have existed as such a dialogue before the Mahābhārata and may have been appropriated by the author of the Mahābhārata to his own purpose. But yet . . . I am prepared to adhere, I will not say without diffidence, to the theory of the genuineness of the Bhagavad-Gītā as a portion of the original Mahābhārata."

I think the third alternative hypothesis, which was mentioned by Telang only to be summarily dismissed, can now be established on secure grounds.

211. Our reasons for believing that the Gītā was originally an Upaniṣad and was subsequently taken up into the body of the Mahābhārata to fill up the place occupied by a dialogue of similar contents in the original Epic are stated below:

(i) Even the editors of the Mahābhārata in its present form call our episode "Bhagavad-Gītā Upaniṣad" as at the end of every chapter of the Gītā in the extant recension of the Epic, we find the words "Thus ends the chapter entitled 'so and so' in the *Upaniṣad Sung by the Lord*," etc. (*Bhagavad-Gītāsu Upaniṣadsu*). (ii) The commentator Madhusudan Saraswati compares the Gītā with the dialogues in the Vedas especially in the Upaniṣads, as those

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between Janaka and Yájñavalkya. (iii) The relation between the teacher and the pupil is pretty much the same in the Gîtâ as in the Upaniṣads, the teacher demanding absolute faith and reverence from the pupil and sometimes identifying himself with Brahma in both cases, as exemplified in the stories of Satyakâma Jávâla and Up-kosala Kâmalâyana in Chand. Up. IV. 4-9, 10-15, Indra and Pratardana in Kauṣîtaki III, Yama and Nachiketa in Kath. Up. (iv) As in the Upaniṣads (Chand. III, 11, 4, Mund. I, 1-2), so in the Gîtâ (IV. 1-3) the origin of the secret wisdom is assigned to the oldest period of history and traced back to the creator of the world. (v) The text is pervaded through and through by the spirit of the Upaniṣad and in an old poem, generally quoted by the commentators and inserted in the current editions of the Gîtâ, by way of eulogizing or glorifying its contents, we are told that the nectar of immortality in the Gîtâ is, as it were, the pure milk from the cow consisting of all the Upaniṣadas, which was milched by the milkman Kṛṣṇa in the presence of Arjuna serving as a calf and for the enjoyment of the wise, who are to drink this milk. Nothing could be more authoritative than this verse about the traditional view that the purity and sublimity of the teachings of the Gîtâ must have had their original sources in the soil and the atmosphere of the Upaniṣads. (vi) Even a large number of verses<sup>1</sup> in the Gîtâ are almost quotations from the Upaniṣads with slight modifications in some cases, e.g. :

G. II. 19—Kâṭha II. 19.

G. II. 20—Kâṭha II. 18.

G. II. 29—Kâṭha II. 7.

G. III. 42-43—Kâṭha III. 10-11.

Kâṭha VI. 7-8.

G. VIII. 11—Kâṭha II. 15.

G. XV. 1—Kâṭha VII.

G. XI. 48, 53—Kâṭha II. 8-9,  
II. 23-24.

G. V. 13—Svet. III. 18.

G. XIII. 14, 15—Svet. III. 16-17.

Besides there are still more numerous passages in the Gîtâ, where the stamp of the speculations of the Upaniṣads is too apparent to escape the notice of discerning scholars. We may quote a large number of verses from the Upaniṣads which present thoughts perfectly parallel to those of the Gîtâ, so far as the combination of theistic and pantheistic ideas is concerned (*vide* Para. 15, Part I, Chap. II, sec. 1).

(vii) Apart from the general similarity of thought in the Gîtâ and the Upaniṣads, there is a peculiar kinship of our text with the

<sup>1</sup> These verses, however, are suspected to be interpolations.

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Kaṭha Upaniṣad which cannot fail to strike every serious reader. The problem of the immortality of the soul is the kernel of both the scriptures ; and the teachings concerning the nature and the means of salvation are markedly similar in both ; the large number of verses quoted from the Kaṭha Upaniṣad by the Gītā unmistakably shows that the poet of the Gītā was perfectly familiar with the Kaṭha Upaniṣad.

212. (viii) Agreeing with Pandit Sitánáth Tattvabhushan, I would even go so far as to maintain that the author of the Gītā is indebted to the Kaṭha Upaniṣad III. 3-4 for the plan of his work (*vide* "Kṛṣṇa and the Gītā," pp. 95-6). The dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna may symbolically represent that moral experience in every human soul, that conflict between a higher ideal of duty and the lower dictate of inclination, wherein the mysterious and divine voice of conscience sets itself at war against the desires and self-interest of the individual. Thus the author of the Gītā may have used the old story of the Mahābhārata as his material for the illustration of a spiritual truth, so that our acceptance or denial of particular historical facts concerning the traditional Mahābhārata is immaterial for a proper understanding of the teachings of the Gītā.

213. (ix) There is a close connection between the Gītā and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, and we have already noticed the views of Weber and Max Müller on the implications of their resemblance in thought (*vide* Bk. I, Chap. II, paras. 15-16). If Barth regarded the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad as a sort of "Shivaite Bhagavad-Gītā," one can more appropriately describe the Gītā as a Kṛṣṇaite Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad. But strictly speaking, the Gītā is a product of the same religious, moral, social and intellectual environment as the Kaṭha and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads, and the use of such epithets as Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva for God in the Gītā no more proves the Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata character of the Gītā than the expressions *Śiva*, *Īśāna*, *Maheśvara* (connotations of the Supreme Being) employed in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad make it a text-book of the sect of Śaivism, for both of them belong to the pre-sectarian stage of the religious history of India.

214. (x) Though I cannot agree with Hopkins in holding that "the Divine song is at present a Kṛṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuite poem," I must give full support to his view, viz., that the Gītā was at first an unsectarian work, and perhaps a later Upaniṣad.

215. (xi) Dr. R. G. Bhándárkar explains the reference in Gītā XIII. 5 to the poetical works of previous Ṛṣiṣ as implying that the doctrines contained in this chapter of the Gītā are based on some of the Upaniṣads and some treatises setting forth the constitution of the world and the principles of morality, and adds that these treatises may have been the discourses, which were at *first independent and afterwards included in the Sántiparva* and in other parts of the Mahábhārata, or they may have been others, of which we have no trace. We are not only inclined to accept the surmise of Bhándárkar that certain treatises of a philosophical and religious nature, originally independent, were later on incorporated in the Great Epic, but also prepared to go a step further and maintain that the Bhagavad-Gītā was itself, in its origin, such a distinct and separate treatise, belonging to the class of older Upaniṣads, which was afterwards appropriated by the editor of the Mahábhārata in course of the subsequent stages of the development of the latter. I would like to add that the Gītā was an Upaniṣad belonging to a later period than that of the Bṛhadáráṇyaka and Chhándogya, Aitareya and Kauṣītaki Upaniṣads and that it seems to have originated at an age not far removed from the date when the Kaṭha and Śvetásvatara, Íśa and Mundaka Upaniṣads were composed, as the Gītā seems to breathe in the same spiritual atmosphere, and to follow nearly the same line of religious and philosophical thought as the latter, although the Divine Song attains a higher level and exhibits a more advanced stage of development, not only as regards language and style, but also with regard to the comprehensive and systematic character of the various concepts of philosophy and modes of ethical discipline and ideas and practices of spiritual culture contained in it.

216. (xii) Dr. Macnicol also hints that the Bhagavad-Gītā is rightly to be described as an Upaniṣad, having more unity than most of its kind and aiming at comprehension, its policy of comprehension being entirely in agreement with its purpose consciously or unconsciously being ironical. He says that in these respects it is not unique among the Upaniṣads, as Śvetásvatara Upaniṣad, too, belongs to the same type (*vide* "Indian Theism").

217. (xiii) This is also confirmed by the fact that just as the ancient classical Upaniṣads were followed and imitated by sectarian Upaniṣads of later times (e.g., Nṛsiṃha Tápanīya, Gopála Tápanīya, Ráma Tápanīya, Hayagriva and even Allah Upaniṣads), so also



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the Bhagavad-Gītā was in subsequent times the source of inspiration and the model of composition for many sectarian writers, who labelled their works of a much inferior type with the name of a Gītā, e.g., Rāma-Gītā, Śiva-Gītā, Viṣṇu-Gītā, etc. (*vide* Tilak's "Gītā-rahasya," pp. 2-6).<sup>1</sup>

Thus the concurrence of the ancient Indian tradition with the researches of modern scholars justifies us in assigning to the Gītā the same status and independence as to an Upaniṣadic treatise.

### SECTION II. THE ORIGINAL GĪTĀ VIEWED INDEPENDENTLY OF THE EPIC MAHĀBHĀRATA

218. Now, the question will naturally arise, "Can we treat the present Gītā apart from its Epic relations? Is it not an integral part of the Mahābhārata story? What does the text of our Bhagavad-Gītā tell us on the point? Does the great Epic bear any trace of its having received subsequent additions and interpolations in the form of the Bhagavad-Gītā and other didactic texts?" Let us now turn to the texts themselves for an adequate answer, appealing to our reason as the supreme judge, relying on our critical faculty as the principal advocate and interrogating hard, solid facts as our sure witnesses.

That the Gītā is not intimately connected with the Epic Mahābhārata, nor forms an integral part of the latter, will be evident from the following facts and considerations:—

219. (i) The Gītā itself does not refer to the Bhārata war except in the first chapter (I-46) and the concluding verse of the last chapter (XVIII. 59-60, 72-78). These verses, however, must be regarded as additions made to the original Mahābhārata by those who inserted the Gītā in it. For the interpolators must have found

<sup>1</sup> Mr. B. G. Tilak explains the term Bhagavad-Gītā Upaniṣad as implying that in this work the essence of all the Upaniṣads has been set forth, without recognizing that the Gītā was itself an Upaniṣad in its original form. We shall discuss his view of the Gītā as a part of the Mahābhārata later on. But we are fully in agreement with Mr. Tilak as to the name of the *Bhagavad-Gītā* or the *Gītā* being an abbreviated form of the Bhagavad-Gītā Upaniṣad, as is evident from the feminine form of the epithet Gītā corresponding to the feminine gender of the substantive *Upaniṣad*, of which the expression *Bhagavad-Gītā* is an adjective.

Mr. Tilak gives a long list of similar Gītās in other parts of the Mahābhārata and the Purānas, e.g., Anugītā (also called Brahmanagītā), Pingalagītā, Sanpakagītā, Monkigītā, Bodhyagītā, Vichakhyagītā, Haritgītā, Vṛtragītā, Parāsaragītā, Hansagītā, Avadhutagītā, Aṣṭābakraḡītā, Iswargītā, Uttaragītā, Kapilagītā, Ganeshagītā, Devigītā, Pāṇḍavagītā, Bhikshugītā, Yamagītā, Rāmagītā, Vyāsagītā, Sutagītā, Suryyagītā, etc. He admits that the composition as well as the subject matter of all these Gītās makes it clear that they were all written after the Bhagavad-Gītā had already attained wide fame and popularity.

it necessary to introduce certain verses at the beginning and at the end of the original Gîtā-Upaniṣad so as to adapt it to the new context of the great Epic.

220. (ii) Similarly there are Epic associations in some of the verses in the second chapter (II. 1-10 and 31-38), which may also be regarded as parts of the original Epic interpolated in this Upaniṣadic Gîtā in order to bring about the fusion or unification between the works originally independent of one another, and thereby to secure a perfect harmony between the older Gîtā and the present Epic narrative. Moreover, the ideas underlying the verses G. II. 31-38 are diametrically opposed to the doctrine of disinterested action which forms the burden of the ethical teachings of the Gîtā, and the presence of these verses naturally raises in our mind the suspicion that they were not parts of the original Gîtā-Upaniṣad, but somehow found their way from the original Epic to the interpolated Gîtā through the unconscious error of a copyist or the wilful device of an ardent redactor. Even an orthodox scholar like Bankimchandra Chatterjee, reputed to be a skilled master in the art of literary and historical criticism in Bengal, was inclined to consider these verses to be interpolations.

221. (iii) The verses III. 1-2 and 30, which seem to have a remote association with the Mahābhārata story, are, however, found on a close examination to be quite compatible with the Upaniṣadic Gîtā, for the subject matter of the whole of the third chapter indicates that the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna was concerned with the problem of the relation between the path of knowledge and the path of action, and not with that of fighting or not fighting in the battle of Kurukṣetra ; and this is also confirmed by the verse III. 30, where the use of the verb ' fight ' in the imperative (*yudhyasva*) implies an exhortation to engage in a spiritual battle in the field of duty, and not to prepare for a physical combat with blood-relations. Besides, the tone and the spirit of the question asked by Arjuna in the beginning of the third chapter of the Gîtā is so apparently in discord with the relation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as conceived in other parts of the Epic that we are bound to recognize here the Upaniṣadic rather than the Epic character of the poem ; for, evidently Kṛṣṇa could not have been accused of confounding Arjuna with misleading words had he been already accepted as a divine incarnation, as is done almost throughout the Epic.

222. (iv) Then in thirteen out of eighteen chapters of the Gîtā

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(viz., Chap. IV-X and Chap. XII-XVII) we do not meet with a single reference to the scene of the battlefield of Kurukṣetra, nor to the Epic story or incidents of any kind, which might remind us of the fact that Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna had anything to do with the Bhārata war or that the object of the teachings of the Gītā was to induce Arjuna to fight, so pre-occupied and deeply absorbed are both the speakers of the dialogue in topics relating to the modes of spiritual culture, the ethical ideal and subtle metaphysical concepts.

223. (v) It is only in the eleventh chapter that we find a few verses (XI. 26-28, 32-34, 41-42, 46) which seem to indicate the Epic relations of the Gītā. The genuineness of these verses in the eleventh chapter might as well be doubted on more than one ground. We admit that the revelation of the Divine Form or the representation of God as working in nature and history, with the Universe as His body and human beings as His instruments, as meets us in this chapter, does not impair the unity of thought in the Discourses of the Gītā if they are taken in their spiritual significance. But the hideous picture of Kṛṣṇa as the awful Dispenser or terrible destroyer, biting to pieces the heroes and soldiers assembled in the theatre of war, certainly comes violently into conflict with the essential spirit of the Vaiṣṇava religion of love and reminds one of the cult of Śakti worshippers who symbolize the destructive power of the deity through the image of Goddess Kālī.

We may also concede that the original of this mode of representation of the Universal and Infinite Form of God may be found in the hymns of the Ṛgveda (e.g., Puruṣa Sūkta) and the allegorical teachings of the Upaniṣads (e.g., the whole universe being depicted as the sacrificial horse in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad), and that the general framework of the chapter may be allowed to stand as the original contribution of the author of the Upaniṣadic Gītā. But still we find it difficult to reconcile the presence of these verses 26-28, 32-34 and 41-42 with the absence of any reference to the Epic narrative of the events of the war throughout the whole of the poem from the second chapter to the eighteenth (except of course the concluding six or seven verses of this last chapter). But the internal self-contradiction of these verses will be more than evident from the fact that in verse 46 Arjuna asked Kṛṣṇa to assume his former (i.e., usual) form, *having four arms*, implying that Kṛṣṇa even in his usual form possessed four arms and was thereby recognized in virtue of this special distinction to be the veritable incarnation

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of God, while in the verses 41-42 there is clear indication that in his usual form and ordinary intercourses, Kṛṣṇa was treated just like any other man, as a friend of Arjuna and called by his name Kṛṣṇa or Jádava, without the slightest suspicion that there was anything divine about him. It is more reasonable to assume that the prayer put in the mouth of Arjuna in this chapter and many other verses signifying the divinity of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā are later additions made by Kṛṣṇa-worshippers and not to be regarded as genuine parts of the original Gītā, nor of the original Mahābhārata.

224. (vi) Another point showing the inconsistency of these verses deserves mention. If the object of the Gītā had been to induce Arjuna to fight, as the Epic narrators would have us believe, there was no need for any further discourse, after the Divine Form was revealed to Arjuna, and the whole of the last seven chapters of the Gītā (XII-XVIII) might easily be dispensed with. For Arjuna says at the end of Chapter XI (verse 51) that he is now restored to his consciousness and composure at the sight of the human form of Kṛṣṇa, and there is almost a repetition of the same verse at the end of the eighteenth chapter (verse 73), where, too, Arjuna says that he has now regained his memory (or true knowledge) and his ignorance is dispelled. As this delineation of the revelation of the Divine Form was later on imitated in many other parts of the Epic and in some of the Purāṇas, we may rightly assume that it was a very popular piece and attracted the attention of all writers. It is not improbable, therefore, that the beauty and the sublimity of the eleventh chapter tempted some of the sectarian enthusiasts to insert in it their own compositions and to pass them in the name of the author of the Gītā. We are inclined to ascribe the presence of the few verses associated with the Epic war in the eleventh chapter of the Gītā to this fact and to reject them as later interpolations.

225. (vii) Thus if we read the various chapters of our text with a critical eye, we discover that there is very little in them to justify the current and erroneous notion that the Gītā is a genuine part of the Mahābhārata, while all evidences converge to favour the hypothesis of its Upaniṣadic origin and character. If we simply exclude about eighty verses from the present Gītā (e.g., I. 1-46, II. 1-10, 31-38, XI. 26-28, 32-34, 41-42, XVIII. 59-60, 72-78) we can divest it of all Epic associations without creating any void in its philosophical and religious contents.



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226. (viii) Of course, there will still remain the irreducible minimum of the Epic basis of the Bhagavad-Gītā in so far as Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, who are the chief heroes or principal figures in the Mahābhārata Epic, are also represented as the prominent speakers in the dialogue of the Gītā. But Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as they stand in our poem need not be taken as historical persons or imaginary heroes as painted in the Great Epic, for there are no facts or incidents about their life and character, related in other parts of the Mahābhārata or in the Purāṇas, which enter into the fundamental doctrines or the essential spirit of the discourses in the Gītā.

227. (ix) When we consider the propriety or suitability of the Gītā as a whole in its relations to the Epic text, we find that like many other didactic episodes of the Mahābhārata the Gītā does not fit in very well with the narrative of events leading to or associated with the war of Kurukṣetra, so that the removal of the Gītā from the Bhīṣmaparva would not create any gap in, or impair the beauty of the Epic story. On the contrary, we are at a loss to understand (i) why Arjuna, who is reputed to be the hero of a hundred fights and has already taken part in fratricidal warfares, who has conjointly with his brother Pāṇḍavas planned the whole procedure and made long and elaborate preparations for this great war, should be so overtaken by a temporary weakness and overwhelmed with grief just at the moment when he is about to engage himself in the fatal combat, and (ii) why Kṛṣṇa who is supposed to be the Almighty Ruler and Dispenser of all events and to make of every man an instrument in his hands for the realization of his Divine ends, should take the trouble of going in a round-about way and spending so much of his valuable time and energy in persuading Arjuna to fight.

228. (x) Those who regard the Great Epic as an authentic history in each and every part of it and as representing facts as they actually happened in the remotest period of Indian antiquity, will find it difficult to explain, without having recourse to a theological faith or supernatural miracles, which are of course beyond rational criticism, how such lofty speculations on Ethics, Philosophy and Religion could be carried on in the midst of intense excitement prevailing among two belligerent parties with a stupendous array of troops on both sides face to face, and how these sublime practical lessons of the Gītā, ranging from the restraint of senses to the



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practice of Yoga, the most difficult art of realizing God in all and all in God, could be effectively taken to heart and assimilated and even carried out in actual conduct by Arjuna within such a short time ; for while the Gítá tells us that it takes many years of constant practice and patient perseverance to curb the desires of the mind and to acquire the habits of disinterested action, the weak and tender-hearted Arjuna, overwhelmed with grief as he was, seems to have instantaneously mastered all these modes of discipline and culture and proceeded to the field of action immediately after the Discourses of the Gítá were finished. If it be urged as against this objection that by the grace of God and with the aid of the Divine Revelation, even impossible feats can be accomplished by ordinary mortals and within the shortest possible time, we wonder why the whole travail of discussion on subtle metaphysical topics throughout the eighteen chapters of the Gítá could not be dispensed with in favour of this miraculous performance by means of grace and revelation.

229. (xi) Evidently the object of the Gítá was not to induce the hero Arjuna to fight, but to educate the soul of man in the art of conquering passions and other enemies of the moral life, that tempt us daily in the spiritual battles of the world, and in the light of this supreme end all the discourses of the poem can be consistently and satisfactorily explained. But from this view-point we cannot accept the Bhagavad-Gítá as a genuine part of the Mahábhárata, even if the Epic is considered to be a product of pure poetic imagination without any historical foundation.<sup>1</sup> For even a fiction or creation of fancy is subject to rules of propriety which make it amenable to the judgment of literary critics. Now, considered by the standard of symmetry, order, sense of proportion, poetic justice and such other canons of literary criticism, the introduction of the Bhagavad-Gítá with over six hundred verses of most sublime and beautiful didactic elements, at the point when the great Bhárata war is about to begin, exceeds all limits of propriety and forms an anomaly which can only be accounted for by the supposition that the combination of the Bhagavad-Gítá Upaniṣad with the Bhárata Epic is more or less accidental and that the former was inserted in the body of the latter by some foreign interpolators. It seems

<sup>1</sup> I am not at present concerned with the question of the historicity of the Mahábhárata or of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna.

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very probable that in the original Epic there was a short discussion as to the propriety of killing one's kith and kin in the battle, and an exhortation to the Kṣatriyas on the duties of fighting with a faith in the future life and in the immortality of the soul, as Holzmann suggests; and that it is on the basis of these discussions and exhortations that the original Gītā-Upaniṣad was remodelled, and inserted in the Epic by the interpolators exactly at the place where the Gītā section begins in the present Mahābhārata.

### SECTION III. CONCLUSIONS OF PART II

230. Our critical study of the relation of the Gītā to the Mahābhārata and careful review of the contributions of modern scholars on the subject, then, seem to justify us in forming the following conclusions: (i) The Bhagavad-Gītā was in its original form an Upaniṣadic treatise, independent of the Epic Mahābhārata. (ii) It was later on incorporated into the Epic by later editors along with other didactic episodes. (iii) The Epic Mahābhārata, too, was not originally what it is in its present form, but has passed through various stages of development and through successive editions in the hands of different authors, so that many of its parts, like the Gītā and the Mokṣadharma sections, are of older origin and are to be treated as later additions to the Epic. (iv) Even in its present form the Gītā can be viewed entirely apart from its Epic relations and this poetic episode contains evidences enough to show that the significance of its teachings far transcends the local and temporal limitations imposed on it by its connection with the Mahābhārata incidents and can be truly grasped only when its moral and religious lessons are dissociated altogether from the Epic setting and the scene of the Kurukṣetra war. (v) The object of the poet of the Gītā was not to induce Arjuna, the hero of the Epic, to engage himself in fighting against his kith and kin, but to teach humanity the sublime art of self-control and self-conquest in the midst of the trials and temptations of the world, and to encourage the human soul in fighting its battles in spiritual life, the battles of the spirit against the discordant elements of the flesh, of duty against desires and inclinations.

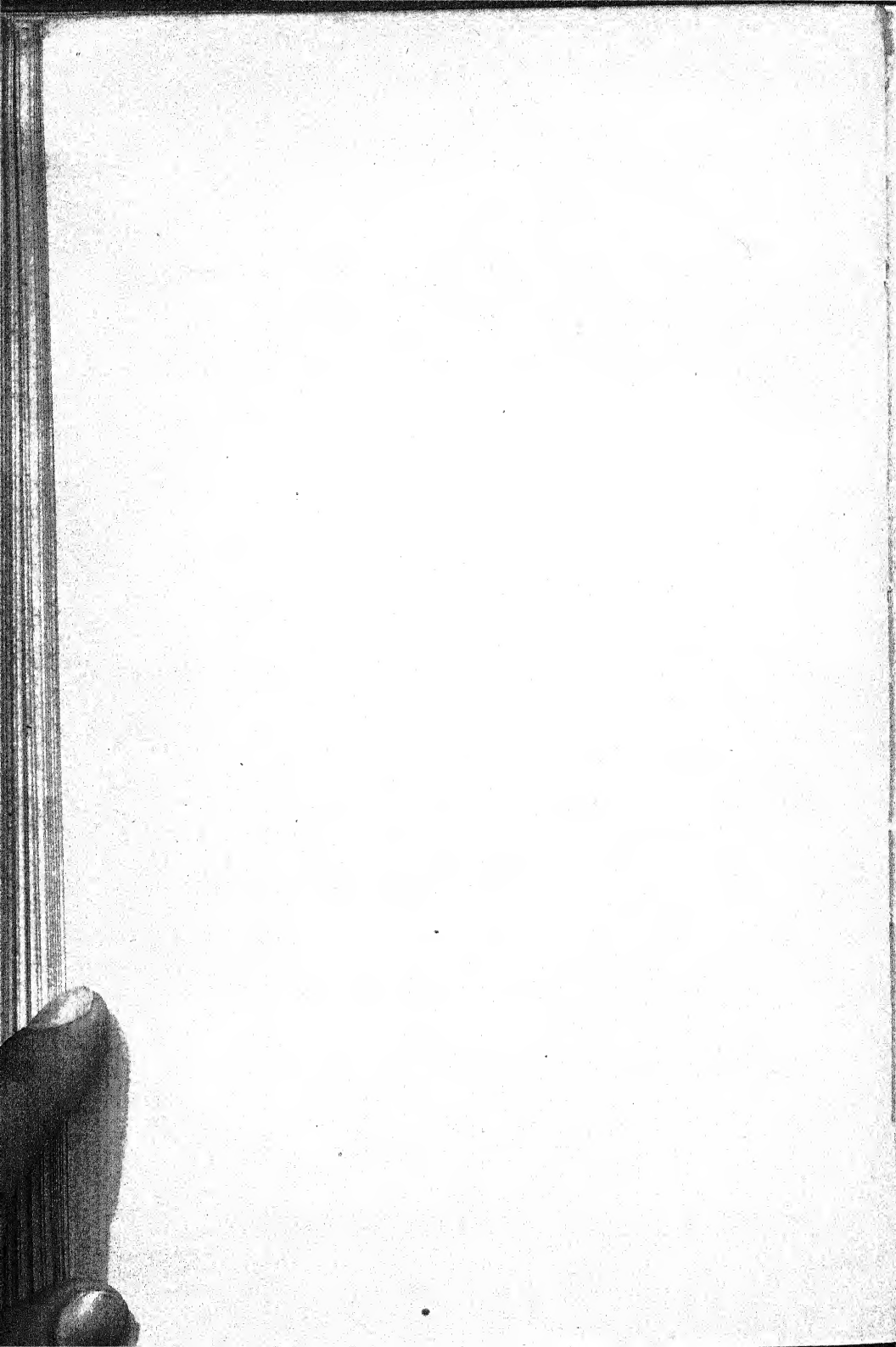
We have also hinted that the Mahābhārata and the Gītā have both received their Kṛṣṇaite character at a later period and that Kṛṣṇa himself has played the role of a human hero and a divine

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incarnation in successive stages of the development of the Epic. But we must devote a separate Book to the consideration of this important problem, as there is a good deal of controversy on the subject of the relation between the religion of the Gítá and the religion of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva. And this will form the subject matter of Part III.

PART THREE

THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND THE BHĀGAVATA RELIGION





## CHAPTER I

# THE EPIC AND THE GĪTĀ AS THE WORKS OF A VAIṢṆAVA AUTHOR AND PRODUCTS OF THE KṚṢṆA CULT

### SECTION I. PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED

231. We have maintained that the Bhagavad-Gītā was originally an independent treatise of the Upaniṣadic form which was later on taken up into the body of the Mahābhārata. Those who regard the Gītā as an integral part of the Mahābhārata and accept them both as the works of the same author, generally do so on the assumption that the glorification of Kṛṣṇa is the central theme of the Epic as well as of the episode, and that both the scriptures were written by a Vaiṣṇava author. In the present book we propose to deal with the question whether the Gītā and the Mahābhārata are and have always been Kṛṣṇaite in character, and whether the original Epic and the original Gītā received numerous additions and modifications in the hands of Bhāgavata editors and Vaiṣṇava interpolators and were originally united by them in their present form subservient to the needs and interest of a sectarian propaganda.

232. That the Bhagavad-Gītā is a product of the Bhāgavata religion and represents the teachings of the Divine Incarnation Kṛṣṇa who is supposed to have acted as a charioteer of Arjuna in the Kurukṣetra war of the Mahābhārata is a belief so widely prevalent among the Hindus and is so deeply rooted in the Indian traditions that hardly any commentator has doubted its validity or thought it necessary to examine the basis of this assumption. Even modern scholars of India and Europe, who have seriously questioned the soundness of most of the time-honoured traditional beliefs and often rejected as untenable, because unhistorical and uncritical, some fundamental presuppositions of the ancient commentators with regard to the interpretation of Indian philosophical and religious texts, have tacitly accepted or expressly

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supported this common notion as to the Bhāgavata origin and the Vaiṣṇava character of the teachings of the Gītā. While Barth finds in the Gītā the oldest dogmatic exposition not only of Vaiṣṇavism, but of the sectarian religion in general, Dahlmann recognizes in this philosophical dialogue the sublimest expression of the Epic-mystic relation of the Divine and heroic elements in the persons of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and holds that it belongs to that legend-cycle which built itself around Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna under the influence of the Yoga-idea and was taken up into the genuine epic element, coloured by sectarian Kṛṣṇa cult. Hopkins speaks of the Gītā as the Kṛṣṇaite version of an older Viṣṇuic poem.

233. We shall now proceed to discuss the views of such eminent scholars as Mr. C. V. Vaidya, Mr. Subbā Rāo, Mr. B. G. Tilak, Sir R. G. Bhāndārkar, Bankimchandra and others, who maintain either that the Gītā is a product of the Bhāgavata sect of Vaiṣṇavism or that the Epic Mahābhārata as a whole is composed in honour of the Vaiṣṇava incarnation Kṛṣṇa and according to whom, therefore, its various episodes, including especially the Bhagavad-Gītā, have received a sectarian colouring and must be interpreted in that light. We propose to subject the views of all these scholars to a critical investigation and draw out the elements of truth contained therein, rejecting all that is contrary to historical facts or to the laws of thought. To keep up the continuity of our treatment with the result of the last book, it will be convenient to discuss the relevant topics of the subject under our consideration in the following order :

(i) Is Kṛṣṇa the central figure of the Mahābhārata and was the author of the Epic a Vaiṣṇava poet ?

(ii) What is the relation between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Epic, which is the principal source of our information about the origin and earliest form of the Bhāgavata movement ?

(iii) What are the differentiating features in the Gītā that lead some scholars to deny its Upaniṣadic origin and accept this text as a product of the Bhāgavata religion ?

## SECTION II. KṚṢṆAITE CHARACTER OF THE EPIC AND THE GĪTĀ

*(The views of Mādhavāchāryya, supported by Subbā Rāo)*

234. The orthodox view of the Mahābhārata is perhaps most clearly presented by Mādhavāchāryya, who tells us in his *Tātparyya*

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*Nirṇaya* that the Bhārata is the guide to or standard of all the right conclusions which the several scriptures (viz., Ṛgveda, Pañcharātra, original Rāmāyaṇa and Brahmasūtra) are intended to teach, and these conclusions are illustrated in the Bhārata by reference to authenticated facts. As of all the *avatāras* of almighty God Srikṛṣṇa is the nearest in time, the events of the world in relation to this incarnation are adopted as illustrations. Following his authority Mr. Subbā Ráo has laid great stress on the fact that Kṛṣṇa is the central figure of the Mahābhārata. "Even to the casual reader," says Mr. Ráo, "the general tenor of the work is evidently the glorification of Viṣṇu, and as such the work must be explained only with reference to the spirit of the Ṛgveda Samhitā. This tenor of the Bhārata is recognized in the later works. Vyása is often referred to as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, and he is said to have made the Bhārata Vaiṣṇavite in spirit, and these references must have some intrinsic relation and references to support the view. To show that the same spirit pervaded all the literature would then be the effect the author intended to produce.

"Again we are told, the Bhārata story is the repetition of the typical story of facts and the eternal strife between the good and the evil, repeated in the oldest Vedic literature as the struggle between the Suras and the Asuras making visible the dispensation of the almighty Providence. This leads to the view of the Bhārata as a story of the working of Providence, and only in this light the full force of the Vyása's statement becomes evident, viz., 'There is nothing equal to Nārāyaṇa, nor was, nor will be. With the help of this true proposition I shall explain all facts.'<sup>1</sup>

235. In another place Mr. Ráo upholds the theory of incarnation and reality of Kṛṣṇa's supremacy in the original Epic in the following words: "There is a just and real craving of the human mind to see or believe that the Universal Power does the grand work. Srikṛṣṇa came to the world when a Yuga (world-period) was to be succeeded by another, and he did such work, therefore he is accepted as an *avatāra* (i.e., God descending in the human form). In the Bhārata as a whole Kṛṣṇa is (i) connected with the story, and (ii) is considered to be one Supreme being, whose glories are sung by himself or by Vidura, Bhīṣma and other sages, all concluding with praises of his supremacy. The most unsympathetic criticism

<sup>1</sup> Nāsti Nārāyaṇam samo na bhūta na bhaviṣyati.  
Anena satyavākyena sarvametat sādhayāmi.

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cannot compel us to believe that in the original Bhārata, there was no mention of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Being and his workings either as one of the actors or even as the God of the author or of the community by whom or for whom it was written. Hence it may be emphatically stated that Srikṛṣṇa is the one main hero or object intended by the author to be celebrated in his grand work."

236. Against this view of the Epic Mahābhārata and its relation to Kṛṣṇa, we may offer the following criticisms :

(i) As we found in the case of the relation between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, the views of these scholars are coloured by certain beliefs and assumptions which partake of the character of religious dogmas and creeds, and cannot be easily brought within the purview of criticism in the light of history or reason. The fundamental error in this conception of the Mahābhārata arises out of the fact that the Epic is viewed as a ready-made finished whole and is not looked at from the point of view of development and therefore no discrimination is made between successive stages of its evolution. Our distinction between the original Bhārata and the present Mahābhārata at once raises the question whether the Kṛṣṇaite or Viṣṇuite element of the present Mahābhārata represents the original essence of the Epic or is only a later addition, and whether the Mahābhārata has developed its present Kṛṣṇaite character by gradual accumulation of sectarian materials or by a sudden transformation in the hands of sectarian editors. As we have seen, many modern scholars like Bankim-chandra, Vaidya, Bhándārkar, Hopkins and Garbe maintain that the present Epic contains in itself materials enough to show that Kṛṣṇa was either absent or regarded only as a human hero in the original Epic, and was deified only at a later period, and that one may trace the evolution of Kṛṣṇaism through various stages in the development of the Epic.

237. (ii) Mr. Ráo does not seem to be sufficiently alive to the implications of his own admission. He says that the general tenor of the Epic is evidently the glorification of Viṣṇu and the work must be explained with reference to the spirit of the Rgveda Samhitá. But it is one thing to say that Viṣṇu, the Vedic God, is the object of glorification and another thing to hold that Kṛṣṇa, the human God, the hero of history and of the Epic, was intended to be celebrated by the author of the Mahābhārata, for the religion of Viṣṇu and the religion of Kṛṣṇa were not the same in the early



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history of the origin and growth of these two cults, and the worshippers of Viṣṇu and the followers of Krṣṇa may have passed through a long stage of mutual rivalry and opposition before the two cults were united and fused together. We know from the sectarian scriptures themselves that Krṣṇa began his career as a reformer by opposing the Vedic religion of sacrifices offered to Indra and other gods. Thus even if it were established that the author of the original Mahābhārata was a Vaiṣṇava himself and wrote this gréat Epic to glorify the object of his worship,

would not necessarily follow that the supremacy of Krṣṇa as an incarnation of God was recognized by him or preached in his works.

238. (iii) Similarly Mr. Ráo supports and justifies the traditional view, referred to in later works, viz., that Vyása is an Avatára of Viṣṇu and made the Bhārata Vaiṣṇvaite in spirit. Now granting this tradition to be well-founded, does it not appear strange to all thinking minds except those who are influenced by sectarianism that one incarnation of Viṣṇu (Vyása) should have thought of glorifying another incarnation of Viṣṇu (Krṣṇa), when both are believed to have been contemporaries? Is it not far more natural and reasonable to conceive that Vyása was accepted as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by the sectarian followers of the Krṣṇa cult because of his writing the Epic which is supposed to have supplied the first-hand authentic information about the life and works of their God, and that this deification of the author of the Mahābhārata happened exactly at the same time when the Bhāgavatas elevated their own favourite hero to the rank of god and identified him with Viṣṇu and also gave a Krṣṇaite colouring to the whole Epic? Moreover, if there is any foundation for the belief that Vyása was not the author but only the editor of the Epic and that he made the Bhārata Vaiṣṇavite in spirit, are we not justified in inferring that originally the Bhārata Epic had been non-sectarian and non-Vaiṣṇavite in spirit before it was edited by this Vaiṣṇava writer? For, we have already seen that, according to Tilak and other scholars, Vyása did not write the Mahābhārata anew, but rather gave a definite shape to the epic materials already existing.

239. (iv) As a matter of fact, Mr. Ráo himself has supplied us with a tool which strikes at the root of his theory, for he tells us that the author of the Epic not only made the Bhārata Vaiṣṇavite in spirit, but also intended to produce the effect that all the literature of his time was pervaded by the same spirit. This is a very signifi-



cant remark which applies to all the sectarian editors and interpolators of ancient and mediæval India. It is therefore not without reason that many foreign critics of our literature have suspected injudicious additions and modifications amounting to falsification of records in many of our texts. If Mr. Ráo could go to the length of asserting that an honest, truthful and pious Ṛṣi—a reputed author and encyclopædic genius like Vyása, was capable of making the whole of the extant literature of his time Vaiṣṇavite in spirit, and of re-handling the Vedas, the Puráṇas and the Bhárata in the interests of Vaiṣṇavism, we should not be charged with a supercritical and irreverent attitude when we discover that the original Upaniṣadic Gītā was tampered with by the sectarian editors of a later age with a view to adapting it to the cult of Kṛṣṇa-Vásudeva.

240. (v) There is another question of historical origin and development with regard to the religion of the Hindus, which has not been touched by Mr. Ráo in his *Mahábhárata Index*. As in the case of Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa so with Náráyaṇa, the problem that presents itself to every critical student of Indian scriptures in the modern age is: When and how was the worship of Náráyaṇa introduced? Was he the same god as Viṣṇu or was he at first different and then unified with the latter? When was Kṛṣṇa identified with Náráyaṇa? The solution of these questions will throw a flood of light on the history and development of Vaiṣṇavism and the Bhágavata movement, and any attempt at giving a Kṛṣṇaite interpretation to the Gītā and to the Mahábhárata without a preliminary enquiry into the origin of the cults of Viṣṇu, Náráyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa is bound to be imperfect and erroneous.

241. (vi) It is one thing to say, as Mr. Ráo does, that the Bhárata is the story of the working of Providence, and a quite different thing to hold that the author of the Epic undertakes to explain all facts in the light of the supremacy of Náráyaṇa above everything, past, present and future. We may accept the former statement as true and yet reject the latter. The Bhárata story may well be regarded as the repetition of the typical story of the eternal strife between good and evil, illustrating the dispensation of the Almighty Providence, without one's upholding the theory of incarnation or accepting Kṛṣṇa as God in the human form. In reality, every great Epic or drama conveys a moral lesson and may be made to show the working of Providence in the human life and society on earth, and an impartial observer will have no

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difficulty in recognizing the hand of the all-wise Ruler of the universe working through the various incidents in the life-history of the Kurus, the Pándavas, the Yádavas and of Kṛṣṇa himself as related in the Mahábhárata. But that does not mean that Nárāyaṇa, in this particular text conceived as the Power that maketh for righteousness and secures triumph of the virtuous, must be identified with any particular hero of the Epic, who himself plays on the stage and is therefore as much subjected to our moral judgment and to the laws of Providence as any other hero.

242. (vii) Mr. Ráo not only betrays his lack of critical spirit, but also the predominance of orthodoxy in his philosophical conception of God, when he identifies the Universal Power working behind all the events of human history and the laws of natural phenomena with a particular finite individual who figures in different parts of the Epic Mahábhárata. As to the belief in Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of God, we must leave it to the temperament and disposition of each individual, as it can neither be dogmatized upon nor criticized, nor brought to the bar of reason, being a matter of pure faith. As to the possibility of God having been born as man and lived on earth to secure specific ends, theologians and metaphysicians may go on wrangling or waging war among themselves, with which we have nothing to do. But this much seems to be certain, that whenever any historical person has been recognized as an incarnation of God, it is more or less an after-thought or subsequent construction of reason or of imagination, and never the fulfilment of a prophecy or prediction nor the actual realization of what was previously anticipated. People first deify a man and then uphold his divine origin by inventing stories about his descent from heaven or by reading into the facts of his antecedents, parentage and childhood meanings of their own. Instead of saying that the great historical personality has been elevated to the rank of God on account of his wonderful spiritual genius or heroic achievement, they project the future or the present into the past under the influence of sectarian Bhakti, and maintain that it was God himself who chose to be born in the form of that individual at an appointed age and locality and worked out a pre-arranged plan. This is true of Buddha, of Christ, of Chaitanya, and was equally true of Kṛṣṇa. All sectarian theories of incarnation have their roots essentially in this weakness of human nature. Even a Rámakṛṣṇa or a Gándhi has been deified in this manner

during more recent times. In any case the concept of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of God, whom the author of the Mahābhārata intended to glorify, is not one that can be based on historical facts, but rests mainly on faith and on the interpretation and valuation of facts in the light of that faith.

243. (viii) Lastly, Mr. Ráo asks us to escape from the prejudice that makes the Bhārata mainly a book dedicated to the Kuru-Pándava story or war, and emphatically states that the most unsympathetic critic cannot compel him to believe that in the original Bhārata there was no mention of Kṛṣṇa as the Supreme Being and his working either as one of the actors or even as the God of the author or of the community by whom or for whom it was written. We have already admitted in the last chapter that the original Epic was not merely a narration of stories but must have contained didactic lessons, and we are also inclined to add that Kṛṣṇa as a human hero and teacher may have played a worthy part in the Epic story of the original Bhārata which probably pictured him as a friend, philosopher and guide of the Pándavas. But we are not prepared to accept the view that the original Bhārata was based on the divinity of Kṛṣṇa or that it regarded him as the Supreme Being. Nor can we admit that the Epic was a sectarian work from the beginning, or was the product of sectarian zeal. In its present form it has undoubtedly a non-sectarian character in the sense that it gives recognition to all the different sects of Hindus prevalent in these days and pays homage to all the gods of the ancient Hindu pantheon. The opinions of modern scholars seem to be verging towards the conclusion that the Mahābhārata bears evidences of a human Kṛṣṇa as well as of a deified Kṛṣṇa, and if the laws of evolution of religious thought are to be rightly applied to Indian literature, the former must be regarded as the earlier stage, of which the latter is a subsequent development. This means that originally the Epic was neither based on, nor directed towards, Kṛṣṇa-worship, Kṛṣṇa being recognized as nothing more than a great human hero.

244. Thus an examination of the orthodox views of the Mahābhārata as represented by Subbá Ráo, following Mādhavāchāryya, reveals not only their inner self-contradiction but also their inconsistency with historical facts and with the critical spirit of modern scholarship. These objections to Mr. Ráo's views are not however based on a *priori* considerations alone, but can be supported

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by unassailable facts supplied by the Mahābhārata itself, as we shall notice while surveying the data collected from the field already explored by many eminent scholars, like Bankimchandra, Tilak and Bhāndārkar on the one hand, and Hopkins and Garbe on the other.

### SECTION III. THE VAIṢṆAVA FEATURES OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA AND THE GĪTĀ

(*The views of Bankimchandra, C. V. Vaidya, R. G. Bhāndārkar*)

245. According to Bankimchandra, who discovers in the Mahābhārata three successive strata of development, the position of Kṛṣṇa is not the same in the first and the second phases of the growth of the Epic. For instance in the original Bhārata of the first stage, Kṛṣṇa is not usually recognized as an incarnation of God or of Viṣṇu, he never admits his own divinity and performs no action by his divine or superhuman power. But in the second stratum he is clearly known as an *Avatāra* (incarnation) of Viṣṇu or as Nārāyaṇa and adored as such ; he declares himself to be God, and the poet is particularly anxious to establish his divinity. It is to be noted that this great scholar rejects whatever is unnatural, unhistorical or miraculous in the life of Kṛṣṇa as a sectarian interpolation in the Mahābhārata and finds this supernatural element relating to the life-history of Kṛṣṇa progressively accumulating in the narrations of Vaiṣṇava scriptures like the Viṣṇu-Purāṇa (Part V), the Harivaṃśa, the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa and the Brahma-Vaivarta Purāṇa. Thus the supplementary Book of the Mahābhārata, known as Harivaṃśa, which deals with the whole story of Kṛṣṇa's birth, childhood and youth in details, is not only regarded by Bankimchandra as spurious or ungentine, but as a work of later origin than the sectarian text of the Viṣṇu Purāṇa. What could be then more reasonable than holding that sectarian influences had been at work in the re-fashioning of the Bhārata Epic with a view to glorifying the heroic figure of Kṛṣṇa as he was gradually elevated to the rank of god? And yet in these views of Bankimchandra we are not to suspect the irresponsible utterances of one who would speak disrespectfully of the person of Kṛṣṇa or of the scriptures of the Hindus, for like every other orthodox scholar, Bankimchandra believes in the theory of incarnation and accepts Kṛṣṇa as a real historical person who led an ideal life and preached a



universal religion and who therefore deserves to be recognized as an incarnation of God. According to Bankimchandra the Bhāgavad-Gītā is not a part of this second stage of the Epic but was interpolated still later during the third stage of its evolution. The Gītā is no doubt a proof of Kṛṣṇa's unrivalled knowledge of the Vedic text, but it is not the work of Kṛṣṇa himself. Whoever may have been the author of this episode, Vyāsa or somebody else, he could not have noted down what Kṛṣṇa uttered and inserted it in the Mahābhārata. But although Bankimchandra does not regard this text as a genuine part of the original Mahābhārata, he believes it to represent the religious doctrines of Kṛṣṇa, which were probably compiled in this form by a thinker who accepted the tenets of Kṛṣṇa and gave wide publicity to the same by interpolating them in the Epic. He does not, however, believe that the discourses of the Gītā were actually delivered by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battlefield at the beginning of the Kuru-Pāṇḍava war.

246. Similarly many other discourses and actions ascribed to Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata are considered by this orthodox scholar to have been later on interpolated by sectarian editors. For example, the Anugītā, which is described as a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, cannot be regarded as representing the religious teachings of Kṛṣṇa or resembling the Bhāgavad-Gītā on any essential point. Thus both in his "Kṛṣṇa Charita" and in his commentary on the Gītā, Bankimchandra asserts unambiguously that the Kṛṣṇaite character of the Epic must be admitted with reservations, that the divinity of Kṛṣṇa is not a genuine element of the Mahābhārata in its original form, and that the Gītā was interpolated in the Mahābhārata by a sectarian writer. While we have quoted the views of this great scholar in support of our position, we do not accept his conclusion that the Gītā was composed by a Kṛṣṇaite poet during the third stage of the development of the Epic. On the contrary, if our thesis of the Upaniṣadic origin and character of the Gītā is justified, this text may have been in existence as an independent work during the first stage of the Epic evolution and may have been inserted in the body of the Mahābhārata during what Bankimchandra calls the third stage of its growth.

247. Mr. C. V. Vaidya in his "Mahābhārata Criticism" deals with the problems (a) as to whether the Mahābhārata was originally Vaiṣṇavite, (b) how the Vaiṣṇavite element grew in it, and (c) what is its present attitude towards Vaiṣṇavite creed, while admitting



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that such questions may be distasteful and delicate from the religious point of view. According to his reading of the Mahābhārata, Vyāsa, the author of the original Bhārata, was an admirer of Śrīkṛṣṇa and worshipper of Viṣṇu and was probably one of those who believed the former to be an incarnation of the latter. He thus holds that the original poem of Vyāsa was written in glorification of Kṛṣṇa or Nārāyaṇa as of Arjuna or Nara. But as there are one or two places in the Mahābhārata where Kṛṣṇa is treated as an ordinary mortal, he admits that Kṛṣṇa-worship was in its infancy when Vyāsa wrote the poem. Vaiśampāyana, the second editor of the Mahābhārata, was probably a more pronounced follower of the Vaiṣṇavite creed than Vyāsa, as Vaiṣṇavas attach special sanctity to his Bhārata, especially on account of its including the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Viṣṇu-sahasranāma. As regards the Bhagavad-Gītā, however, Mr. Vaidya opines that it contains the preachings of Kṛṣṇa, though not in his own words, but in the words of Vyāsa, and that it may have been re-arranged and altered here and there by Vaiśampāyana and made more Vaiṣṇavite in appearance. But it is, he says, pre-eminently the thought of Kṛṣṇa clothed in the language of Vyāsa. Although Mr. Vaidya finds it difficult to detect at this distance of time what other additions and alterations were made by Vaiśampāyana in the interest of the Kṛṣṇa cult, he is convinced, and a critical reader of the Mahābhārata like him cannot but be convinced, that the Vaiṣṇava element was constantly accumulating in course of time. Kṛṣṇa is glorified and praised whenever opportunity offers: the usual story of Avatāras given in the Purāṇas is found, though not in so many words, in the Bhārata in a nucleus form. In the third edition of the Epic, however, the Vaiṣṇavite element underwent a transformation in the hands of Sauti, who was concerned with the defence of the whole of the orthodox religion, as it then existed, against Buddhism, and had to introduce episodes and anecdotes in glorification of Śiva also. Thus according to Vaidya, the Mahābhārata of Sauti became distinctly non-sectarian—an aspect that has made the present Epic dear to all the Hindus, so that all creeds alike claim it as their sacred book. Sauti seems to have made references to Śiva-worship in various places of the Mahābhārata in a spirit of unifying diverse sects that existed when he finally recast the poem.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vaidya contrasts this character of the Epic with that of the Brahmasūtras which discuss and refute the peculiar tenets of Vaiṣṇava and Pāsupata sects.

It is probably in the same spirit that Sauti made other additions in praise of Devi (Bhīṣma Parva), Sūrya (Bana Parva), and Kārtikeya (Bana Parva), who are all looked upon as different manifestations of the Supreme Being. The Mahābhārata, as it is, cannot consequently be looked upon as Vaiṣṇavite, though it was perhaps so in the beginning and though the Vaiṣṇavite element had been accumulating before this final redaction.

248. One cannot help admitting that Mr. Vaidya has struck a deeper root and hit nearer the mark than other orthodox scholars. We are not sure how far Mr. Vaidya is right in definitely fixing the boundary lines of the successive editions of the Mahābhārata in the hands of Vyāsa, Vaiśampāyana and Sauti, but there can be no question as to the gradual accumulation of the Vaiṣṇava elements in the Mahābhārata with each later stage of its developments. We are however compelled to differ from this learned scholar when he says that Vyāsa, or the original author of the Epic, was influenced by the theory of incarnation or that he recognized Kṛṣṇa's divine supremacy. The arguments in favour of this hypothesis are too weak and the materials on which they are based are too inadequate to convince anyone who is not prejudiced or biased by a religious belief.

249. For example, Mr. Vaidya cites the first verse of invocation<sup>1</sup> as an evidence in support of the Vaiṣṇava character of the original Epic. But it is extremely difficult to say whether this verse was composed by the first author of the Epic or inserted by one of the editors. Because, (i) the invocation of God as Nārāyaṇa is itself a later development under the sectarian influence of the Bhāgavatas, and the word Nārāyaṇa never occurs in the Gītā, although it is supposed to contain the preachings of Kṛṣṇa himself in the language of Vyāsa and is generally recognized as an authentic scripture of the Vaiṣṇavas. It is inconceivable that the name of God which is mentioned in the first verse of invocation in the Epic would not have occurred in the prayer put in the mouth of Arjuna or any other passage in the Gītā, had this term been familiar to the Epic editor of that age. Thus the later origin of the term Nārāyaṇa not only suggests that the original Epic was free from any sectarian association, but also that the original Gītā was not a product of the Vaiṣṇava religion. (ii) The reference to Nara as the best of men

<sup>1</sup> Nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya Naramchaiva Narottamam  
Devīm Sarasvatīṃchaiva tato Jayam Udirayet.

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may imply either Kṛṣṇa or Arjuna, according as Nārāyaṇa is taken to mean God Himself or the incarnation Kṛṣṇa, and in either case, the association of these heroes of the Epic with the Supreme Being or their identification must belong to a later sectarian period. The Epic does not even in its present form conceal the humanity of Kṛṣṇa, and it is inconceivable that its first author would begin with a verse which recognizes not only Kṛṣṇa but also Arjuna as adorable. (iii) Vyāsa himself is often declared to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu, and there is no reason why one incarnation should write a work to glorify another. (iv) The invocation of Saraswatī, the goddess of learning, along with Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna also gives us the impression of the later origin of this verse. (v) Mr. Tilak gives us a different reading of the verse, according to which Vyāsa himself is invoked along with Nārāyaṇa, Nara, and Saraswatī (as the last line runs, according to Tilak, as "Devīm Saraswatīm Vyāsam tato jayam, etc"). If this reading is correct the verse should not be attributed to Vyāsa, but must be regarded as the composition of a later editor who added this in honour of his own deities and of the original poet.

250. Mr. Vaidya himself makes a distinction between the worship of Viṣṇu and admiration of Kṛṣṇa in the attitude of Vyāsa, and says that at the time of the Brāhmaṇas, when Vyāsa lived, Vedic Ṛṣis had come to give precedence to Viṣṇu, ignoring the precedence of Indra, the chief God of the Mantra period, and that Vyāsa reflected the general sentiments of Ṛṣis of the Brāhmaṇa period. But he is inconsistent when he imagines that the worship of Śiva by a sectarian school and the deification of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu also arose at the same period. According to competent scholars the origin of the sect of Śaivism must be assigned to a period between the end of the Vedic and commencement of the Buddhistic period, and the identification of Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu had not taken place at the time when the Gītā was composed (*vide* Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasād Śāstri's address on the Śiva cult at the annual meeting of the Asiatic society of Bengal, 1921, and Dr. Bhándārkar's "Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Sects of India"). We agree with Mr. Vaidya when he says that it is not at all impossible that the Itihāsa or history called "Triumph" which Vyāsa wrote was pervaded with the feeling of admiration which the author entertains for Kṛṣṇa. But to entertain admiration for a person's character is one thing and to

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recognize a person as an incarnation of God and to worship him as such is another thing.

251. In fact the sect of Vaiṣṇavism must have passed through many stages of evolution, and in one period of its development Viṣṇu and Kṛṣṇa must have figured first as independent deities and in a later period they must have been identified with one another. We may concede that at the time of the composition of the original Epic, Viṣṇu was the prominent god of the Indian people and that Kṛṣṇa was already recognized as a great man, but neither the worship of Viṣṇu nor the deification of Kṛṣṇa seems to have actuated the illustrious author in writing this grand work. Besides it appears to be chronologically impossible to assign the Mahābhārata of the first stage to a period when the sectarian worship of Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa or Śiva was prevalent.

252. Mr. Vaidya himself has noticed abundant traces in the present Epic of an earlier stage when Kṛṣṇa was not regarded as anything more than human. For example, in the Muṣala Parva we are told that after the destruction of the Yādavas and the death of Kṛṣṇa, while the wives of the latter numbering thousands were being escorted by Arjuna they were attacked on the way and many of them were carried away by the barbarians; the poet adds that many of the wives of Kṛṣṇa went away of their own choice—a fact which Mr. Vaidya considers to be detrimental to the greatness of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of Viṣṇu.<sup>1</sup> Similarly in the Gadā Parva, Duryodhana is said to be upbraided by Kṛṣṇa after the former's defeat in the hands of Bhīma, but the proud Duryodhana defends himself by a vigorous speech and vehemently condemns the character of Kṛṣṇa. The poet adds, "The gods showered flowers on the dying man in approbation and all those present felt abashed."

253. If these passages belong to the original Epic, as Mr. Vaidya thinks, it is impossible to believe that its author Vyāsa could be one of those who believed Kṛṣṇa to be an incarnation of Viṣṇu. As a matter of fact, Mr. Vaidya is compelled to admit that Kṛṣṇa is treated in these places of the Mahābhārata as an ordinary mortal, and he even goes to the length of asserting that probably Vyāsa here pointed out the only foible in Kṛṣṇa's character and, great

<sup>1</sup> The same story occurs in the Viṣṇu Parva 38, but a mythical explanation is offered for the conduct of these wives, showing how sectarian writers defended the foibles in the character of their lord (Amśavatāra, Chapte 167 of Ād parva).



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as it was, he was not hindered by any particular sentiments from expressing his opinions freely. Again, this learned scholar tells us, it seems clear that Vyāsa did not always side with Kṛṣṇa but expressed his sentiments without bias. If these remarks of Mr. Vaidya are correct, are we not justified in questioning the truth of his view that Kṛṣṇa-worship was in its infancy when Vyāsa wrote his poem, and in maintaining instead that Kṛṣṇa-worship had not yet originated at the time of the composition of the Mahābhārata in its first edition?

254. In fact, Bankimchandra has sought to defend the ideal character of Kṛṣṇa as man by removing many such passages in the Epic as later interpolations made by the poet-editor of the second stratum of the Mahābhārata and maintained that the first stage of the Mahābhārata does not present us anything but a human Kṛṣṇa and there is nothing to indicate his divine character and identification with Viṣṇu till we reach the second stage.

255. We need not here discuss the views of Mr. Vaidya so far as the Vaiṣṇavite elements in the second and third editions of the Epic are concerned, although we may admit in general that there was a marked tendency towards sectarianism and predominance of the Kṛṣṇa cult in one stage of the Mahābhārata, followed by a more liberal and tolerant attitude towards Śaivism and other sects in another stage. Nay, we are inclined to believe that, whoever may have been the editor of the later stages of the Epic, be it Vaiśampāyana, Sauti, or some other writers, there was certainly a period when the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas were vying with each other in glorifying their respective gods and they must have each influenced the growth of the Epic by turn, as is evident from the fact that Kṛṣṇa himself is said to have performed penances for several years with a view to pleasing Śiva, and these two gods are finally recognized to be the same. Nevertheless it must be admitted that the Vaiṣṇava element undoubtedly predominates in the present Epic, and it is not without reason that the Vaiṣṇavas look upon the Mahābhārata as one of their own scriptures and explain the praises of other gods in it as being intended to delude the world. Mr. Vaidya is thus almost in the same boat with Bankimchandra, so far as growth and development of Kṛṣṇaism in the successive stages of the Bhārata Epic is concerned, and their joint authority enables us to reject the view that the original Epic was a sectarian product



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and that Kṛṣṇa-cult was a dominating feature at the very outset of the Mahābhārata and in all its stages, as held by some scholars.

256. Sir Rāmakṛṣṇa Gopāl Bhāndārkar also recognizes in the Mahābhārata successive stages of Kṛṣṇaism and speaks of several Kṛṣṇas being identified in the person of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa. Many parts of the Mahābhārata, says he, represent a state of things in which the Divinity of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa was not generally acknowledged. While Dr. Bhāndārkar finds in the Bhagavad-Gītā no evidence of Kṛṣṇa's identification with Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa, nor of divine honours having been paid to the four members of the Vṛṣṇi race who have subsequently been deified and conceived as the four-fold Vyūhas of the Bhāgavatas (viz., Vāsudeva,<sup>1</sup> his brother Saṅkarṣaṇa, his son Pradyumna and his grandson Aniruddha), he believes that between the period of the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Anugītā, the identification of Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa with Viṣṇu had become an established fact.

257. It is apparent from the variety of opinions of competent critics on the subject quoted above that there is substantial agreement between the views of Bhāndārkar and those of Vaidya and Bankimchandra as to the growing importance and gradually progressive development of the Kṛṣṇaite element with each succeeding stage of edition of the Epic. Among the Western scholars, Hopkins and Garbe have discovered in the Epic Mahābhārata several stages of the growth of the Kṛṣṇa cult. For instance, according to the former, Kṛṣṇa is at first regarded as a demi-god and then identified with Brahman or all-god, while the latter conceives of a third or intermediate stage between the two mentioned by Hopkins, viz., the stage when Kṛṣṇa must have been accepted as God, but not identified with Brahma. We have already discussed their views in Part I, while discussing the theories of interpolation in the Bhagavad-Gītā.

258. Dahlmann holds the present Mahābhārata to be coloured by sectarian Bhakti or devotion to the mystic-divine unity of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, but since he regards the Kṛṣṇa-myth and the Arjuna-myth to have been originally independent story-cycles which were later on combined by the Rhapsodic art in the interest of moral and religious education, we may assume that

<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that "Vāsudeva" is said to be all this (*Sarvomaṁ*) in the Gītā (VII, 19).

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the original Bhárata story of the Kurus and Pándavas was non-sectarian and did not uphold the divinity of Kṛṣṇa.

259. Thus without entering into details and discussing the merits of all the propositions laid down by these eminent scholars of the East and West, we may remark that in the face of the considerable mass of opinions to the contrary, the dogmatic assumption of Mr. Subbá Ráo, viz., that the glorification of Kṛṣṇa as an incarnation of God has always been the central theme of the author of the great Epic, cannot be accepted as a simple and self-evident proposition, but requires to be substantiated by proofs, which are not forthcoming. We should do well to recognize that in the Mahábhárata there has been first a development from the non-sectarian to the sectarian character and then again an advance from the sectarian to the catholic and tolerant attitude towards all sects. This line of development is generally true of the history of the composition or compilation of most of the scriptures and of the religious movements in India.

From a wider standpoint the evolution of moral conduct and the evolution of the religious life in a people run parallel to each other, and as in the former there is an advance, from the lowest stage of natural, spontaneous, unconventional, unconscious and the reflective morality which is still simple and innocent, to the conscious and reflective stage which is therefore more exposed to trials and temptations and even occasional falls and lapses, and then from this reflective stage to the highest stage of intuitive and spiritual understanding and pursuit of the moral ideal, so in the latter, the unsectarian simple religion of faith is succeeded by the sectarian and militant spirit in religious life, which leads in the end to a higher synthesis and harmony of all sects. In the light of these historical facts and the scientific law of evolution, we must discourage every attempt at reading into these philosophical and religious texts of India (viz., the original Bhárata and the original Gítá) a sectarian meaning or ascribing them a sectarian origin, just as we must divest ourselves of all national vanity or racial jealousy in studying and interpreting the scriptures of other lands. Sectarianism is not the proper guide for entering into the true spirit of religious and philosophical works dealing with truths of eternal and universal significance. And nowhere is this condition more essential than in the case of studying the Gítá. Historically sects of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivaism arose later than the original Mahá-

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bhárata and the original Gîtá, and it must be said to the credit of our ancient thinkers, that both these scriptures have even in their present forms retained their universal and liberal character and survived the dishonest attempts at falsifying their meanings made by sectarian interpolators, who not only extracted into them passages of their own composition but wanted to appropriate them and adapt them to their own end by turning or twisting their original plan and purpose.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GĪTĀ AND THE NĀRĀYAṆĪYA SECTION

#### SECTION I. BHĀGAVATA ORIGIN OF THE GĪTĀ AS HELD BY BHĀNDĀRKAR AND TILAK

260. Nothing has helped more substantially to create the impression of the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā among ancient and modern scholars of India than the references to the Bhagavad-Gītā found in the "Mokṣadharmā" chapter of the Śāntiparva — which includes a section entitled Nārāyaṇīya, and the similarity of certain doctrines in these two works. Sir R. G. Bhāndārkar and Mr. Tilak are agreed as to the Nārāyaṇīya being one of the earliest documents of the religious and philosophical teachings of the Bhāgavata sect, and explain the resemblance between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya by reference to their common origin in the religious movement which was initiated by Vāsudeva, the Kṣatriya hero of the Vṛṣṇi race, whose faith was first adopted by the Sāttvata race in the Muttra region and gradually extended to other parts of Northern India under the names of Ekāntin, Sāttvata, Nārāyaṇīya, Bhāgavata, or Pāñcharātra religion.

Dr. Bhāndārkar concludes after an examination of the religion of the Gītā and of the Ekāntin Drama as described in the Nārāyaṇīya, that the idea of a religion of devotion arose in earlier times, but it received a definite shape when Vāsudeva revealed the Gītā to Arjuna and it led to the formation of an independent sect when Vāsudeva's brother, son, grandson, viz., Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha were associated with the former. But he maintains that the doctrines of the Bhāgavata school were not yet reduced to a system at the time when the Gītā was composed, while the Nārāyaṇīya section must belong to a system-making period when the three Prakṛtis of the Supreme Being (G. VII. 4-5) were personified into Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, who were members of the family of Vāsudeva, thus giving rise to the doctrine of four Vyūhas. Mr. Tilak, on the other hand, is not

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only convinced of the fact that the Gītā is a product of the Bhāga, vata sect and that in it the Bhāgavata religion has been established (as it has been clearly mentioned in the Śāntiparva 346, 10)-but also concludes from the similarities of language and thoughts in the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya that they were composed by the same poet who evidently wrote the Epic Bhārata to glorify the deeds and teachings of Kṛṣṇa. He therefore affirms that all discussion about the Gītā without any reference to Bhāgavatism will be erroneous and imperfect.

261. To show that the views of these distinguished scholars are untenable, one has simply to examine the contents of the two episodes of the Mahābhārata, viz., the Nārāyaṇīya section and the Bhagavad-Gītā, and one will find reasons to conclude that the points of agreement and difference between them do not justify the theory of their common Bhāgavata origin. As the various chapters of the Nārāyaṇīya are rather loosely related to one another and seem to contain thoughts and concepts belonging to different strata of philosophical and religious history of India, we may take them in separate groups for our consideration.

### SECTION II. DIALOGUE BETWEEN NĀRADA AND NĀRĀYAṆA— STORY OF THE WHITE ISLAND

#### ANALYSIS OF ŚĀNTIPARVA, CHAPTERS 335-340

262. The Nārāyaṇīya section (Śāntiparva, chap. 335) opens with the question, "Which god is worshipped by the householders, Brahamachāris, Bānaprasthas, Bhikṣus" and the question, "What is salvation and who is highest among the gods and Pitṛs?" In answer to the first question, a dialogue between Nārada and Nārāyaṇa is related.

We may note here that the external setting of the two episodes of the Mahābhārata is different. While the religion of the Gītā is revealed by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the battlefield at a moment of weakness and depression on the part of this latter hero, the religion of the Nārāyaṇīya is imparted by Nārāyaṇa in a calmer atmosphere to Nārada who is in the attitude of earnest enquirer after spiritual truths. But this difference is more or less accidental and need not be emphasized. What is, however, more important is that here we not only meet with the concept of Nārāyaṇa as a personal God, which is not mentioned in the Gītā even once, but also hear of four



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different but definite forms of Náráyana, which are altogether foreign to the conception of the Gĭtā.

The latter no doubt speaks of God's being born in different periods or creating Himself from time to time to secure the triumph of righteousness, and even enumerates a long series of His divine manifestations in the various provinces of nature and mental life, but nowhere does it mention the divine forms of Nara, Náráyana, Hari and Kṛṣṇa. It is to be noted that in this section of the Śāntiparva a distinction is drawn between Náráyana and Paramātmá and the former is said to be worshipping the latter. Another distinction is drawn between Náráyana as the highest God and Náráyana as one of the four forms of God. Then the terms Hari and Kṛṣṇa, which are generally employed by the Vaiṣṇavas as designations of God, are used to denote two visible manifestations or personal forms of God as two sons of Dharma. Again, the two forms Hari and Kṛṣṇa are said to have stayed at Badarikāśrama previously to Nara and Náráyana who are now practising penances there. From a careful examination of these and similar passages the inference seems to be irresistible that we have here a later stage of development of the Bhakti doctrine than in the Gĭtā and that the cult of Nárāyaṇīya, which must have been at first independent of the cult of Kṛṣṇa, was just beginning to ally itself with the Kṛṣṇa-Viṣṇu worship during the period when the Nárāyaṇīya section was composed. This impression will be strengthened and confirmed when we consider the other points of difference between the Gĭtā and the Mokṣadharmā chapter of the Śāntiparva.

263. According to the Nárāyaṇīya section the liberated souls are conceived to be those who can abandon the subtle body consisting of 5 Jñānendriyas, 5 Karmendriyas, 5 Prāṇas, Manas and Buddhi, the gross body consisting of 15 parts, three guṇas and all Karmas or actions. There is nothing corresponding to this conception in the Gĭtā, although we have in the latter details of the characteristics of ideal men, known as *sthitaprajña*, *Guṇātīta*, or those who are the "beloved" of God. The liberated souls are said to attain Paramātmá, by whose grace the single-minded devotee is led to the highest goal. There is indeed a marked similarity between the Gĭtā and the Nárāyaṇīya section so far as the demand for single-minded devotion as a condition for salvation is concerned. But the description of the liberated soul in the

latter corresponds rather to the doctrines of the later systems of philosophy and sectarian religions and therefore betrays a later origin.

264. In the next chapter (chapter II, 336), we have a description of Nārada's journey to Śvetadwīpa. According to some scholars (including Dr. B. N. Seal) this passage betrays the Christian origin of the doctrines contained in the Nārāyaṇīya, while according to others (including Garbe) it has no historical significance at all but is a pure product of fancy. We are inclined to accept the views of the latter, but whichever opinion may be right, it is significant that in the Gītā there is not the slightest reference to this remarkable story. Had the author of the Gītā and of the Nārāyaṇīya been the same or if they were products of the same religious movement, it is impossible that the poet of the Gītā would have failed to mention such an interesting incident or at least some of the important doctrines taught in this chapter.

It cannot be denied that in some verses of this chapter we have signs of an ethical and devotional religion which resembles to some extent the religion of the Gītā, but the point of similarity is extended too far when it is claimed that they represent an identity of thought and expression between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya and that these works are therefore products of the same religious movement. Some of the virtues which are said to prove Nārada's fitness for the beatific vision (like respect for the elders, study of the Vedas, truthfulness, equal regard for all, etc.) were the common heritage of the time and indicate no special relationship, while other virtues of the same devotee mentioned in the same context are too commonplace to require any notice and have not been as a matter of fact mentioned in the Gītā. The only significant feature of resemblance lies in the element of Bhakti, i.e., constantly worshipping the Supreme Deity with devotion. But even this element loses much of its force, when we examine its connotation in the two texts under consideration. For in the Nārāyaṇīya this devotion is associated with Nārāyaṇa and other Vaiṣṇava forms, while in the Gītā there is no such sectarian reference according to our interpretation.

265. We observe other striking differences between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya in the story of king Uparichara. In the Gītā we have no reference to the Pañcharātra of Sūrya and the Nīti Śāstra of Bṛhaspati as guides to conduct; while in this story of the Śvetadwīpa Viṣṇu is regarded as the supreme God, we are

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expressly told in the Gītā that among the infinite manifestations of God are to be counted Viṣṇu among the Adityas, Bṛhaspati among priests, Indra among the gods, and the sun (Sūrya) among the luminous orbs, so that Viṣṇu, Indra, Sūrya and Bṛhaspati are exactly on the same level so far as their relation to the Supreme deity is concerned. Here in the Nārāyaṇīya, however, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa have already been identified, and Indra, the lord of gods, is brought down to the level of Uparichara, an earthly king, on account of the latter's devotion to Viṣṇu. Evidently a considerable volume of waters had flowed down the Ganges since the Gītā was composed, and at the time of the Nārāyaṇīya the sectarian cult of Viṣṇu-Bhakti or Nārāyaṇa-Bhakti had begun to assert itself in a systematic manner with a definite scripture and mythology of its own, throwing the Vedic gods of Indra and Sūrya in the background.

266. This is confirmed by the description given in this Nārāyaṇīya episode as to how the code of ethics (and politics) known as the Nīti Śāstra of Bṛhaspati was made by seven Mahārṣis and Manu, the son of Swayambhū. These great Ṛṣis, it is related, worshipped Nārāyaṇa for a thousand years, on which Nārāyaṇa was pleased to order the goddess Saraswatī (the Muse presiding over learning) to enter into their body. By the grace of Saraswatī they prepared the Nīti Śāstra consisting of 100,000 verses musically set in tune with "aum" and not contrary to the four "Vedas." It is worth mentioning that the Gītā contains not only no reference whatsoever to this scripture of Nārāyaṇa's gift and inspiration but none to the goddess of learning, Saraswatī, either. Evidently this Nīti Śāstra of 100,000 verses, which seems to have been lost to us, was once sought to be appropriated by the worshippers of Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu under the cover of some such story, and we suspect the same was done in the case of the Epic Mahābhārata and the Upaniṣadic Gītā. One is tempted to enquire whether much of the didactic portion of the Mahābhārata is based on this Nīti Śāstra, as Saraswatī and Nārāyaṇa are equally invoked by the author (or Editor?) of the present Epic, and the teachings of the Mahābhārata too are said to be not contrary to the four "Vedas" and even regarded as having the authority of a fifth Veda. However, this at least is certain that the Gītā has nothing to do with these mythological narrations in the Nārāyaṇīya.

267. In chapters 337 and 338, the description of the White

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Island and the story of Uparichara are further elaborated. The relevant points that deserve our attention are :—

(i) Uparichara performed a horse-sacrifice (Aśwamedha) ceremony at which no animals were killed. This seems to indicate that Vaiṣṇavism, like Buddhism, was at first, as it still is, a religion of *Ahimsá*, averse to taking the life of animals. That animal-sacrifices were the order of the day and those who observed the principle of non-killing (*Ahimsá*) incurred the displeasure of the gods will be evident from a discussion that took place among the gods and the Mahārṣis with regard to the propriety of performing the sacrifices with or without the killing of animals, and that king Uparichara was approached by the two contending parties as the umpire. As this worshipper of Viṣṇu sided with the gods and supported animal sacrifices, he was cursed by the Bráhmaṇas and dislodged out of his seat in the heaven and degraded to the earth. This story seems to have been invented by the Vaiṣṇava authors to show the evil effects of encouraging animal sacrifices.

I am not prepared to agree with those scholars who would discover in this story traces of the Buddhistic influence on the early Vaiṣṇava movement, but am inclined to believe that this feature of aversion to killing of animals was a natural and indigenous growth in the pre-Buddhistic Vedic age, as *Ahimsá* was enjoined by the Indian code of ethics and religion as early as the days of the Upaniṣads, and as the Gītā too includes “*Ahimsá*” in the list of virtues (XVI. 2).

What is more important for us is the fact that the author of the Gītā does not expressly undertake any special pleading for or against animal sacrifices, but tries to idealize this ancient Vedic institution of sacrificial observances in general by giving spiritual interpretation to it. While condemning those who perform sacrifices out of vanity, arrogance and hedonistic motives (e.g., desire for reward in heaven), the author of the Gītā maintains a conservative attitude and enjoins that sacrifice should be performed in the right spirit and in the right manner as enjoined by the scriptures and should not be renounced. In any case, our poet could not be an orthodox Vaiṣṇava like the author of the Nārāyaṇīya episode.

268. (ii) During the performance of the horse-sacrifice, we are told, Nārāyaṇa appeared before the king as Átman and took his share of the offerings, although the former was not visible to anyone except the latter. At this Bṛhaspati, the priest, got angry



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and wanted to see Nārāyaṇa himself, but the king asked the priest to control his anger as the god Nārāyaṇa has no anger and can be seen only by those with whom he is pleased. Three sages, Ekatá, Dwita, and Trita, who were versed in all the scriptures, introduced themselves as the spiritual descendants (mánasa Putra) of Brahmá, and described their visit to the White Island with a view to seeing Nārāyaṇa. The substance of their speech is that Nārāyaṇa could not be obtained by austere penances even for a thousand years, but the blessed inhabitants of the White Island alone were able to see him. He has revealed himself there and one must go there to see him. These favoured residents of the Śvetadwīpa were characterized by their steadfast devotion to Nārāyaṇa whom they always adored with undivided heart, uttering the name of Brahmá. They vied with each other in apprehending and adoring Nārāyaṇa, praying "Glory to the Lotus-eyed God (Pundarikákṣa)" and "Hail Hṛṣīkeśa, the supporter of the world (Visvabhávana), and the great spirit (Mahápuruṣa), we bow to thee." None without devotion (Bhakti) can see him. One whose mind is wholly devoted to him can alone see him, after many years of penances. There are some elements of moral and spiritual significance in these chapters which certainly remind us of the Gītā teachings—for instance, we find the term Bhakti employed here in the sense of whole-hearted devotion, single-minded meditation and adoration of God. Such designations of God as Puruṣottama, Deva Deva, Visvabhávana, etc., also meet us in these passages. Besides we are told that austere penances are ineffective for the attainment of spiritual vision and that God is not visible to the priest but only to the devotee.

269. Notwithstanding these similarities, however, we are compelled to reject the theory of the common origin of the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya on the following grounds:—

(a) The mythical character of the whole story of Uparichara, the fictitious narration of the residents of the White Islands, the reference to the sages Ekatá, Dwita, Trita, and the resort to the fanciful device of a voice from the heaven, are all absent in the Gītā and indicate the later origin of the Nārāyaṇīya episode.

(b) The realistic-humanistic representation of Nārāyaṇa, confining him to a certain locality of the earth, viz., the White Island, and making him accessible to the "chosen few" as well as the application of such terms as Pundarikákṣa and Hṛṣīkeśa to Nārāyaṇa, prove the sectarian origin of the whole piece.



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(c) The poet of the Gītā has not only exhibited a much finer skill of delineation and a more refined art of visualizing abstract truths of philosophy and religion by means of visible symbols, but also gives us a loftier and purer form of spiritual culture and a more comprehensive and harmonious ideal of God-consciousness with its reconciliation of Jñāna (wisdom) and Karma (action) with Bhakti (devotion) and its doctrines of universal salvation, liberal disposition and catholic tolerance, free from any sectarian bias or narrow spirit of bigotry.

270. In the chapters 339 and 340, we find Nārada praying to Nārāyaṇa and Nārāyaṇa revealing himself and imparting his message to Nārada. Those who compare the prayer put in the mouth of Arjuna in the Gītā with this prayer of Nārada in the Nārāyaṇīya will recognize the great difference in thought and language between the two, which can only be accounted for by the supposition that the former was composed at a much earlier date than the latter.<sup>1</sup> There are other features in these two chapters which differentiate the composition of the Nārāyaṇīya from that of the Gītā. For here we not only meet with alliterative expressions peculiar to the classical style, which remind us of Kālidās and post-Christian poets, but also technical terms of scholastic philosophy and sectarian theology which point unmistakably towards the pedantic character of its author and bear traces of its origin at a later stage of Indian thought. For example:—

(a) Nārāyaṇa is described as Prajāpati, Suprajāpati, Mahā-prajāpati, Banaspati, Urjaspati, Vāchaspati, Jagatpati, Manaspati, Divaspati, Marutpati, Jalapati, Prithivipati, and Dikpati (all superfluous repetitions of nearly the same idea, viz., Lord of the Universe with all its parts).

(b) He is called Amṛteśaya, Hiraṇeśaya, Deveśaya, Kuśeśaya, Brahmeśaya, and Padmeśaya, as he lies (or dwells) in the individual soul, in the heart, in the senses, in the ocean, in the Vedas and in the Universe.

(c) Again a series of terms ending in āvāsa (abode) are applied to him, e.g., Bratāvāsa, Samudrāvāsa, Yasovāsa, Tapovāsa, Dayāvāsa, Lakṣmyāvāsa, Vidyāvāsa, Kīrtiāvāsa, and Sarvāvāsa.

<sup>1</sup> Even if we suppose, as some scholars suspect, that the prayer of Arjuna to Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā XI is a later edition made by Vaiṣṇava interpolators at the time when the Gītā was incorporated by them into the Mahābhārata, it must be admitted that its purity and sublimity as compared with the prayer of Nārada is a sufficient proof that even the insertion of the Gītā in the Epic with some interpolations had been made long before the Nārāyaṇīya was composed.

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(d) He is not only identified with sacrifices and their parts and conceived to be the enjoyer of all the shares in the sacrifice but also called Yajña, Maháyajña, and Pañchayajña.

(e) His glory is said to be declared in the Pañcharātra Vedas and he is identified with Sāṅkhya-yoga and the form of Sāṅkhya. Then we meet with such technical expressions as Viṣaksena, Baṣat-kāra, Diggaja, Dighbānu, Bidighbānu, Hiranyāsaya, etc., as well as Haṃsa, Paramahaṃsa, Mahāhaṃsa. Again there is not only mention here of the first three mantras of the Ṛgveda, of the five fires beginning with Gárhapatya, of the Veda with its six parts, of Prágjyotiṣa, Jyeṣṭhasāmaga, Atharvaśiras and Pañchamahākāla, but also of Fenapáchārya, Bálakhilya, Baikhānas, Kauśika, Puresthita, and Purohita, with each of which Nārāyaṇa is identified. He is said to have sacrificed three times in the fire called Nachiketa. Besides he is addressed as Vāsudeva, Sarvachandraka, Harihara, Chitraśikhandi. All these technical expressions are unknown to the poet of the Gītā, who has given us quite a number of allusions to mythical names and stories in the tenth and the eleventh chapters, but has nowhere mentioned any of those enumerated above.

271. But the Purānic character of the Nārāyaṇīya episode and its sectarian origin at a much later date than the Gītā is nowhere more clearly manifested than in the chapter 340, where Nārāyaṇa reveals his form and teaches his doctrines to Nārada. We may profitably compare the description of the form of Nārāyaṇa, as found here, with that of the divine form as revealed by Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā. A discerning and critical mind can easily discover in the former a more realistic, anthropomorphic and at the same time more artificial and therefore less sublime imitation of the latter, although the Gītāic delineation is to some extent more elaborate than the Nārāyaṇīya. While in both texts, numberless eyes, heads, and arms are ascribed to the Divine Form, the Nārāyaṇīya is concerned more with the description of the variegated colours and radiances in the body of the Supreme, and presents us with the picture of a Yogi or hermit uttering "om," singing the Vedic hymns with the Āraṇyakas, and holding in the hand various materials for ascetic practices. In contrast to this, the Gītā reveals to us an all-pervading ever-active God not less sublime than beautiful and not more lovable than terrible. In the discourses that follow, Nārāyaṇa tells Nārada that his form has been born in four parts in the house of Dharma, that the devotees of

the White Island, who have the brilliance of the moon and have mastered their senses, are meditating on him without taking food and with single-minded attention, and Nārada should leave the place without delay, lest they are disturbed. None of these features of the Bhāgavata scripture is traceable in the Gītā. Then we have been supplied with a whole system of metaphysics about the nature of the Paramātmā (who is here designated also as Vāsudeva), about his distinction from the individual self, about the dissolution of the world in water, of water in the light, of light in the air, of the air in space, of space in mind, of the mind in Prakṛti and of Prakṛti in Paramātmā, about the evolution of the body out of the five gross elements, about the individual soul as regulating vital breaths in the body, about the Jīvātmā being called Bhagavān, Ananta, and Saṅkarṣaṇa and giving birth to Pradyumna, who is like the mind of all beings, from which again is born Aniruddha, the self-consciousness (Ahaṅkāra) of all beings. He is also known as Īśvara (the lord) and the revealer of all actions, and it is from him that the whole universe proceeds with all its causes, effects and instruments.

This elaborate philosophy with the detailed description of the four Murtis or forms of God is entirely absent in the Gītā, which nowhere mentions the names of Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha at all, and the conclusion which has been drawn by Dr. Bhāndārkar seems to be quite reasonable, viz., that at the time of the Gītā, the Bhāgavata religion and its philosophy had not been reduced to a system, that the doctrine of Vyūhas had not yet developed, nor had the brother, son and grandson of Vāsudeva been as yet deified and associated with the worship of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva. But we find reasons to go a step further and maintain that the Gītā in its original form was composed at a time even when Kṛṣṇa was not deified and the sect of Bhāgavatas with their special tenets of the worship of Kṛṣṇa and his associates had not yet originated.

272. We may note that the ideas about the relation between the absolute and the Individual seem to have been in a fluid condition at the time of the Nārāyaṇīya. For in one place we are told that Paramātmā (Vāsudeva) and Jīvātmā (Saṅkarṣaṇa) are one, that the wise declare God as the essence of Jīva, while in another place there is mentioned the production of Anantadeva Saṅkarṣaṇa from the original form Vāsudeva. As we know, the Vedāntists

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are divided into two camps on this point, and Rámánuja and Śaṅkara have offered two different interpretations of the Brahma-sūtras with regard to the attitude of the Bhágavatas towards this question. In the Gítá (VII. 5, XV. 7), there is a definite assertion that the individual is a part and indeed the higher aspect of the Universal soul, and thus both the relations of identity and difference are applicable in the case, but a suggestion about the production of the Jiva from the Supreme Spirit is also contained in the Gítá XIV. 4. There is thus a similarity in this respect between the two texts, as also with regard to the doctrine of single-minded devotion towards God as the means of salvation. This point of agreement may be traced to their common spiritual heritage from the seers of the Upaniṣadic age, for, as we have seen, the Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads favoured a theistic as well as a pantheistic view of the relation between the individual and the Supreme Spirit. But the absence in the Gítá of the doctrine of four Vyúhas, consisting of Vásudeva, Śaṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha, who are identified respectively with Paramátmá, Jívátmá, Manas and Ahaṅkára in the Náráyanaíya, proves indisputably that the poet of the Gítá was born and brought up in the Vedántic atmosphere of the Upaniṣadic Age without being influenced by the sectarian philosophy of the Bhágavatas, while the text of the Náráyanaíya was through and through a product of this Vaiṣṇava sect.

273. Besides, the cosmology of the Mokṣadharmā presents a striking resemblance to that of the Sāṅkhya system, although the former is pervaded by a theistic spirit. Some scholars have been led to make a distinction between the epic Sāṅkhya and classical Sāṅkhya in order to explain the whole philosophy of the epic age. The Gítá does not however offer any such difficulty and can be safely assigned to the pre-systematic stage of thought that prevailed in the Upaniṣadic period. Again, Náráyana says that Brahmá with four mouths always meditates on his multifarious deeds. Lord Rudra was sprung from his forehead out of his anger. We have also a mention of the eleven Rudras, twelve Ádityas, two Áświnis, eight Vasus said to be the best of gods, Prajapati with Dakṣa at the head, seven Mahārṣis, eight-fold glory, Saraswatī, the mother of the Vedas, the Pole-star, the best of the luminous, four-fold Pitṛs, all residing in the body of Náráyana, who also identified himself with Hayagrīva. Here, too, this Bhágavata scripture goes much beyond the symbolical representations



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or Bibhûtis described in the tenth chapter of the Gītā and betrays its later origin. But this is not all.

274. Unlike the Gītā, the Nārāyaṇya gives much prominence to the sectarian gods of the Purāṇas, Brahmā and Rudra, and delegates his power to these gods for creation and destruction respectively. Nārāyaṇa is said to have created Brahmā, who then pleased him by adoration and obtained a boon, according to which Brahmā was to win Nārāyaṇa as his son, and to be the lord of all the worlds and to be worshipped by the Devas, Asuras, Ṛṣis, Pitṛs and varieties of creatures. Reference is also made to the prospective descent of Nārāyaṇa on the earth for the sake of helping gods, when Brahmā will treat Nārāyaṇa as his son. Here the realistic and mythical way of representing the relation between God (Nārāyaṇa) and Brahmā, and of God's being born as a son of his Deputy or viceregent Brahmā cannot but strike us as Purāṇic exaggerations of later ages, from which the Gītāic conception is altogether free.

275. Then we are told that Nārāyaṇa had resorted to renunciation after entrusting Brahmā with all his duties, and that renunciation is the supreme virtue or religion, and all should practise renunciation (Nivṛtti). Here the contrast between the Gītā teachings and the Nārāyaṇya doctrines is obvious. The former enjoins a life of fulfilment of duty and harmony of action and renunciation (Karma-Yoga) through freedom from passion, attachment, and desires for consequences, representing God himself as constantly active in the world and upholding the ideal life of householders led by the sages like Janaka as worthy examples for imitation, while the latter insists on renunciation as the essence of religion and holds before us an absentee God, and thereby reminds us of Christian Deism.

276. Yet another new conception meets us in the Bhāgavata scripture. Nārāyaṇa is said to be declared by the Sāṅkhya philosophers as Kapila dwelling in the solar circle and endowed with the power of wisdom (Vidyā Śakti), as the lord Hiranyagarbha in the Vedic scriptures and as one devoted to Yoga (Yogāsakta) in the Yoga system. He is said to be residing in the heaven in his manifest form at present, but at the end of a thousand world-periods, when the whole universe will be destroyed and all beings movable and immovable will be absorbed in the body of God, he will dwell along with Vidyā (Logos). This is an altogether different picture from what we find in the Gītā, as the Gītā speaks of Sāṅkhya



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and Yoga, but not in the same sense as the systems of philosophy so called, for these terms are used in the Gītā to denote the path of wisdom or reflection and that of devotion or action respectively. Again the Gītā speaks of Kapila among the sages as one among a thousand and one manifestations of God, but nothing about his dwelling in the sun or his association with Vidyā ; nor is there any reference in the Gītā to the concept of Hiraṇyagarbha which is as old as the Vedic Samhitā. The Gītā, too, speaks of the alternative dissolution and creation of the universe and the evolution of the manifest from the unmanifest and the return of the manifest to the unmanifest in different world-periods, but there is no mention of the Vidyā sakti (wisdom or Logos) as the mediating factor in this process, although the creative power of God is said to be united with the maternal element (or passivity) of Mahat Brahma (or Prakṛti) in the Gītā.

It is probably from this conception of Vidyā that the later Vaiṣṇava concepts of Lakṣmī, Śrī and Rādhā were developed. This circumstance alone is sufficient to prove that the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya are not products of the same author, nor of the same age, and that the former belongs to a purer soil and a higher level as well as older mode of thinking than the latter.

277. We need not conceive that the Vaiṣṇava scheme of evolution and Vyūhas as represented in these passages of the Nārāyaṇīya was developed under the influence of the neo-Platonist and Gnostic philosophers, or of the Christian theologians, as Dr. Seal has held, for the doctrine of Logos and the conception of emanation may be easily traced back to the Upaniṣadic stage of Indian philosophy. But there can be no denying the fact that the Nārāyaṇīya theology is separated from the Gītāic philosophy by a wide gulf, which may be taken to measure the long interval that must have passed between the composition of the Gītā and that of the Nārāyaṇīya.

278. To complete the realistic, humanistic and mythical picture of the relation between Nārāyaṇa and the world, we are told that after the successive evolution of the forms of Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha from the original form Vāsudeva, one after another in a descending order, Brahmā is evolved out of Aniruddha and the whole universe is created from Brahmā. For the welfare of creatures, Nārāyaṇa will assume the forms of Varāha (a boar), Nṛsiṃha (man-lion), Bāmana (dwarf) and Paraśu-Rāma, Rāma

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(son of Daśaratha), and Kṛṣṇa, and destroy the enemies of the earth in various world-periods. All sorts of mythical stories like those of the cosmic flood, the fall of the demon Hiraṇya-Kaśipu and of Bāli, the annihilation of the Kṣatriya race by Paraśu-Rāma, the death of the Rākṣasa Rāvaṇa, the birth of the great sages Ekatā and Dvita in the form of monkeys under the curse of Maharṣi Trita, the slaying of Kamsa and many other demons by Kṛṣṇa are referred to in this connection, beside the worship of Śiva and Kārtikeya by the king Bāṇa and much else. But what is most important for us is that Arjuna is specially mentioned as the great helper of the divine incarnation during the last age (the meeting-point between the world-periods of Dwāpara and Kāli), and it is predicted that the people will say the great Nara and Nārāyaṇa have destroyed the Kṣatriyas in the form of Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna for the welfare of the earth. The extinction of the Yādava race is also anticipated here, as also the birth of four forms with Vāsudeva as the head. Shortly afterwards we are supplied with the list of the ten incarnations of Nārāyaṇa in the forms of the swan, the tortoise, the fish, the boar, the man-lion, the dwarf, Rāma, the wielder of the weapons (Paraśu-Rāma), Rāma, the son of Dasaratha, Kṛṣṇa and Kalki.

We may observe the following points of difference between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section as regards this passage :—

(i) The Gītā does not mention the four Vyūhas, but uses the name of Vāsudeva once in the sense of God (VII. 19) and sometimes as the designation of Kṛṣṇa, and speaks of Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣṇis as one of the numberless manifestations of Divinity.

(ii) The Gītā does not use the concept of Avatāra or incarnation of God, nor speaks of his descent in the many forms in any of its verses, although an idealistic and spiritualistic reference to the various forms of self-creation on the part of God for an ethical end is made in G. IV. 5-9 (which may be suspected as interpolations).

(iii) The Gītā does describe the Bibhūti or manifestations of God in the tenth chapter, but none of these six or ten Avatāras are mentioned even among these manifestations, excepting Rāma, the weapon-wielder and Vāsudeva of the Vṛṣṇi race, both of whom are, however, given the same status as any other manifestation and not mentioned as Avatāras.

279. (iv) It is curious that the poet of the Gītā refers to Prahlāda

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as the Divine form among the Demons, without ever alluding to the incarnation of man-lion who is said to have killed Hiraṇyakaśipu, the father of Prahlāda, and that although we have in the Gītā such mythical names as Skanda (Kārtika), the commander-in-chief of the heavenly troops, the elephant Airāvata, the horse Uccaiḥśravās, that is said to have sprung out of the ocean of nectar, there is not the slightest reference to the mythical names or stories relating to the various descents of Nārāyaṇa, which are found in the Nārāyaṇīya and in the Purāṇas.

(v) The later Purāṇic device of predicting the future or narrating the past history of the creation in the form of prophecies, which is resorted to by the poet of the Nārāyaṇīya, is also conspicuous by its absence in the Gītā.

(vi) In the dialogue of the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna occupy almost the same place as Nārāyaṇa and Nārada respectively in the Nārāyaṇīya, and yet Kṛṣṇa never assigns to himself the task of glorifying himself and his friend Arjuna, as the deified Ṛṣis or incarnations of Nārāyaṇa and Nara, while Nārāyaṇa is not only represented in this episode of the Śāntiparva as assuming various forms in the past and future world-periods but also as anticipating how Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna will be regarded in the distant future as forms of Nārāyaṇa and Nara. Besides, although the poet of the Gītā, in describing the manifestations of God, speaks of Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣṇis and Arjuna among the Pāṇḍavas as divine forms, he does not thereby attach any special divine birth or origin to these two heroes, any more than he could aim at deifying all the other Bibhūtis or glorious manifestations of God in the same chapter.

280. The Gītā has mentioned the division of four castes according to qualities and functions, and not only enumerated the duties of the various castes, but also enjoined every man to do his duty by the caste or social group to which he belongs, expressly mentioning that Kṣatriyas are rewarded in the heaven if they face the enemy on the battlefield. But nowhere does the Gītā refer to the destruction of the Kṣatriyas as a moral necessity in the interest of mankind, of their corruption or degeneration as compared with the other classes, while the passages under consideration in the Nārāyaṇīya speak of the descent of God on earth on two occasions for the sake of exterminating the warrior class, once in the form of Paraśu-Rāma and again in the form of Kṛṣṇa. The inference is inevitable that at the time of composition of the Nārā-

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yañīya, the Kṣatriya power was already overthrown, and the Brahmanistic theologians had begun to assert their own supremacy by inventing theories of incarnations, which had for their ends the humiliation and annihilation of Kṣatriyas, while the Gītā was composed when the Indian society, based on the caste organization, was evenly balanced and the Kṣatriyas were in the ascendancy, as is also clearly evident from the fact that the king is said to be the manifestation of divinity among men (X. 27). This is perfectly in accord with our contention about the Upaniṣadic origin of the Gītā, as the Kṣatriyas are generally admitted to have taken a prominent part in the Upaniṣadic speculations.

281. It is noteworthy that Nārāyaṇa is supposed to have revealed himself to Nārada in the Satyayuga, the earliest world-period, long before the various incarnations mentioned in this passage were known and long before Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha were born, so the narration of these stories of successive incarnations of God takes the form of a prophecy in the teachings of Nārāyaṇa. And yet, strangely enough, in the beginning of this chapter Nārāyaṇa calls himself Vāsudeva and speaks of the evolution of his other forms, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha as preceding Brahmā, the creator of the universe. How are we to reconcile the existence of Vāsudeva and three other forms before the creation of the world with their birth as the Vṛṣṇi members of the same name, during the period of transition from the Dwāpara to the Kali-Yuga? The explanation of this curious anomaly or anachronism is supplied by the fact which also accounts for the necessity of a theory of incarnation or descent of God, viz., that all these stories are the result of after-thought or later inventions of sectarian devotees, after Vāsudeva and his fellow members of the Vṛṣṇi family had already been deified and identified with the Brahmanical god Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu. We find abundant traces of the Bhāgavata scholars re-handling earlier texts in order to prove the antiquity of their own cult and of the Vaiṣṇava authors absorbing or appropriating later sectarian works with a view to securing the identification of their own god Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa with the later heroes Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and others. Are we thus not justified in assuming that the Bhagavad-Gītā, too, received its Vaiṣṇava setting or its Bhāgavata colouring, if any, from the same sectarian impulse of the Vaiṣṇava editors of the Epic Mahābhārata?



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282. I have already maintained that the Kṛṣṇa of the Gítá is not to be taken as a Divine Incarnation but as a teacher or a seer after the manner of the Upaniṣadic dialogues, identifying himself with the Supreme Self in a state of Yoga or mystic union with God, and that there is not a single verse in the ethical, philosophical, and religious portions of the Gítá where any historical reference or mythical allusion is made, so as to enable us to identify him with the Kṛṣṇa of the Bhágavata scriptures. In the Nárāyaṇīya text however, such mythical-historical references abound, and almost all the important incidents connected with the life of Kṛṣṇa, as depicted in the Mahābhārata and other Vaiṣṇava texts, are expressly mentioned, e.g., his birth at Muttra, stay at Dwáraká, slaying of Kamsa, Naraka and other Asuras, defeat of king Báṇa, diplomatic destruction of Kála Yavana, Jarásandha, and Śísupála, installation of Yudhiṣṭhira, destruction of Dwáraká and annihilation of the Yádavas—none of which are found anywhere in the Gítá where Kṛṣṇa is said to exhort Arjuna to fight and where the sublime ethical teachings of the poem are associated with the battle of Kurukṣetra. A few personal references to Kṛṣṇa's enemies and Arjuna's friendship in the Gítá (IX. 11-12, XI. 41-42), if they are not to be regarded as interpolations, can be explained in the light of the re-handling of the Upaniṣadic Gítá by the Epic editors. We are therefore justified in holding that the Gítá is neither a product of the Bhágavata school which produced the Nárāyaṇīya, nor a work of the same Vaiṣṇava author who composed this latter episode, and that the Divine song is not to be considered a sectarian scripture and must be completely dissociated from the Vaiṣṇava or Bhágavata or any other sectarian teaching, if we are to understand its true worth and significance.

283. The sectarian character and later origin of the Nárāyaṇīya is also evident from the way in which a reference is made to Kṛṣṇa's defeating Maheśwara and Kártikeya, the gods worshipped by king Báṇa. These sectarian gods are found to fight with each other and then to make offensive and defensive alliances with one another in many parts of the Mahābhārata and throughout the Purānic literature, which represents a state of things when Brahmanical India was made the hot-bed of sectarian jealousies and crusades. It is not unlikely that the theory of incarnation and the identification of one God with another were devices through which the Brahmanical theologians and sectarian devotees adjusted their



mutual differences. But the Bhagavad-Gītā is free from such sectarian influences as it follows the Vedāntic mode of representing all gods, all Ṛṣis, all supernatural and natural beings as manifestations of one and the same God, and speaks of God as Śaṅkara among the Rudras, Skanda among the generals (of the heavenly troops), Viṣṇu among the Ādityas, Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣṇis and so on, and as it maintains that all modes of worship and devotion, to whichever gods they might be offered, were finally directed to the one God and acceptable to Him. We are not to assume that this attitude of Universalism and liberalism and the spirit of toleration and catholicity in the Gītā was the outcome of later ages when the various sects had already appeared in the field, fought with one another and then made up their differences, when a calmer atmosphere of harmony among these sects had prevailed owing to the growth of mutual regard and appreciation. On the contrary, the Gītā has nowhere directly or indirectly referred to any other sects, not even the Bhāgavatas, Vaiṣṇavas, or Sāttvatas, not to speak of the worshippers of Śiva, Brahmā and other sectarian gods. Wherever the poet of the Gītā refers to the usefulness of the sacrifices or to other kinds of worship directed towards various gods, we are to interpret these verses in accordance with the spirit of the Upaniṣadic age and to understand that according to the higher religious ideal of the Gītā, the various Vedic gods like Indra, Sūrya Agni and Vāyu, whom the people of India are still adoring, should be regarded as manifestations of one God. As a matter of fact, we find such references to the worship of various gods in the Kena Upaniṣad which not only tells us distinctly that one Brahma, who is the indwelling spirit behind all our organs of knowledge, is alone to be known, not these (gods) whom the people worship (*Nedam Yadidam Upāsate*), but also gives us an allegorical representation of the supremacy of Brahma over Agni, Vāyu and Indra, who are said to have no power in themselves except what is derived from the great Brahma.

284. But we have one more tangible proof of the priority of the Gītā to the Nārāyaṇīya, the Viṣṇu Purāṇā, the Harivamśa, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other sectarian works. In one of the Nārāyaṇīya passages Kṛṣṇa is mentioned as the last of the six incarnations of Nārāyaṇa. But there is another list of ten Avatāras, according to which the swan, the tortoise and the fish precede and Kalki follows the six already mentioned. Here Kṛṣṇa is called Sāttvata,

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which refers no doubt to Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa. According to Dr. Bhāndārkar, this last-mentioned passage is a later interpolation. In any case Kṛṣṇa is the last of the six incarnations of the Harivamśa as well. But in the Vāyu Purāṇa and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa the system of *Avatāras* is further elaborated and the number and the personnel of the Incarnations are progressively increased, the former mentioning the twelve (including some incarnations of Śiva and Indra) and the latter sometimes 16, sometimes 22, and sometimes 23 *Avatāras*. Dattātreya, Vedavyāsa, Buddha, Sanatkumāra, even Kapila and Nārada have by this time been raised to the rank of divine incarnation. In the Varāha Purāṇa we have the ten usual incarnations including Buddha and Kalki. But what is most important and interesting for us is the fact that Kṛṣṇa, who is regarded as only one and perhaps the last of six incarnations according to the Mahābhārata and the Harivamśa, is in the later Vaiṣṇava scriptures elevated to the dignity of the Supreme deity and identified with Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu, and his place in the system of *Avatāras* is filled by substituting his brother Balarāma instead, on the plea that Kṛṣṇa is God himself (Kṛṣṇastu Bhagavān svayam). The last phase of this progressive development of Vaiṣṇavism in the realistic and humanistic direction is represented by the movement of Lord *Gaurāṅga*, of Nadiā, who has been identified by his followers with Kṛṣṇa of Brindābana, as depicted in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

Now, if we compare the concept of incarnation and the place of Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā with the system of *Avatāras* in these sectarian scriptures, we cannot help maintaining that the Gītā represents a much earlier phase of idealistic thinking and non-sectarian devotion, and that Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is neither one of the ten incarnations nor the Supreme God identical with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa, as held in these later texts, but only a human hero and teacher who speaks of his Divine character and communicates his lessons in the name of God just in the same manner as the Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads did in ancient times. And if this interpretation of ours is correct, the author of the Gītā could be neither a Vaiṣṇava nor a Bhāgavata himself, nor could he know of any Vaiṣṇava or Bhāgavata sect at the time of the composition of the Gītā. Of course he knew of the Mahābhārata story and the heroes of the Epic, Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, but these latter could not have been deified or considered as Nara and Nārāyaṇa at that time ;

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otherwise it is impossible that the poet could have omitted to mention it or give some indirect hints on it.

285. We may mention a few more instances of discrepancy between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section from the same chapter.

(a) Nārāyaṇa is said to be the restorer of the Sruti, which was made in the Satya-Yuga and the meanings of which are explained in the Purāṇas. This is absent in the Gītā.

(b) Brahmā, the creator of countless worlds in countless ages, is said to have learnt this Upaniṣad based on the four Vedas, this unthinkable glory of Viṣṇu from Nārada and then communicated this to the liberated souls, who in their turn preached it to Sūrya (the sun). Sūrya is said to have taught it to sixty thousand followers, who again conveyed the truth to the gods on the mountain of Sumeru. From the gods the glorious message was handed over by Asita Devala to the Pitṛs. Finally, Bhīṣma learnt it from his father Śāntanu and taught it to Yudhiṣṭhira.

We meet with another description of the succession of the Bhāgavata teachings in chapter 348, which widely differs from this list. In the Gītā (IV. 1-2), Kṛṣṇa is said to have taught the doctrine of Karma-Yoga in his previous birth to Vivasvān (the sun), who gave it to Manu, and this latter is said to have transmitted it to Ikṣāku. I suspect these verses to be interpolations, as Hopkins does, but even taking them to be genuine parts of the Gītā, one cannot fail to notice the simplicity of this line of succession as compared with the elaborate and complex list of teachings given in two passages of the Śāntiparva. This also proves the priority of the Gītā.

(c) As in the Gītā, so in the Nārāyaṇīya it is enjoined that the sacred message is to be communicated to none but the devotees, and the merits of reading and expounding the scripture are mentioned. But in the latter, only sectarian devotees of Viṣṇu are entitled to hear the truth, which is not the case in the Gītā.

(d) Moreover, the later Purāṇic origin and sectarian character of this Bhāgavata text may be inferred from the fact that it is said to be the essence of all stories, gathered by the Brahmanas from the Upākhyānas, just as the nectar was collected by the gods and demons churning the ocean.

(e) The same conclusion is forced on us when we consider that Maḥarṣi Kṛṣṇa Dwaipāyana, the author of the Mahābhārata, is described here as regularly going by the aerial route to the Kṣīrode

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Sāgar with a view to worship Nārāyaṇa, and as repeatedly uttering the name of Nārāyaṇa. Yudhiṣṭhira and his brothers are said to have become devotees to Viṣṇu and begun singing the praises of Nārāyaṇa after having heard this story from Bhīṣma. Here one can trace the process of Brahmanizing the Bhāgavata cult. The Pāṇḍavas who were already admirers of Vāsudeva and followers of his cult are now converted to Vaiṣṇavism or the cult of Nārāyaṇa, of whom Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva is supposed to be an incarnation.

### SECTION III. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE GĪTĀ AND THIS BHĀGAVATA SCRIPTURE

#### BRAHMANICAL INFLUENCES EVIDENT IN THE LATTER

(*Śāntiparva, chapters 341-345*)

286. In chapter 341, of the Nārāyaṇīya there are still greater divergences from the philosophy and religion of the Gītā.

(i) The process of evolution here related by Vyāsa, who is said to have obtained by the grace of God the illuminating knowledge of the past, present, and the future, is quite different from that related by Nārāyaṇa to Nārada in the previous chapter and has not the least resemblance to the account of the Gītā. The order of development here is Param-Ātmā, unmanifest Prakṛti, manifest Aniruddha (also known as Ahaṅkāra), Brahmā, five elements and the *guṇas*, seven great Ṛṣis and Manu, who are the founders of the world and the lords of creation (in descending order). From Brahmā were also produced the Vedās and the sacrifices, as well as Mahā-Rudra, the creator of ten other Rudras. In the Gītā we have no mention of Aniruddha but the five elements, mind, intellect and Ahaṅkāra are said to be the eight-fold lower Prakṛti of God. Nor is there any reference in the Gītāic process of creation to Brahmā and the Ṛṣis and Manus as mediators although we have the concept of *Mahat Brahma* as the womb of the material element of the world-generation and seven Mahārṣis and Manus are said to be born of the Divine nature in the Gītā. It is to be noticed that in this chapter of the Śāntiparva Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Pradyumna are omitted altogether, and Aniruddha, who was said to be the fourth form of Nārāyaṇa in the previous chapter, stands third in order of succession, coming after Prakṛti and before Brahmā. This change seems to be the result of the



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development of philosophical thought towards the classical  
Sāṅkhya.

287. (ii) The Sāṅkhya and the Yoga scholars are said to designate the Supreme spirit as Paramātmā while His designation "Mahāpuruṣa" (the Great Spirit) is said to be acquired by His glorious deeds. A distinction is made between the followers of *Pravṛttimārga* (path of action) and those of *Nivṛttimārga* (the path of renunciation), the former including the seven Mahārṣis, Marichi, Angirā, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu and Vasiṣṭha, who performed sacrifices and were great scholars, the latter including Sana, Sanat-sujāta, Sanaka, Sānanda, Sanatkumāra and Kapila, who were versed in Sāṅkhya and Yoga, had intuitive wisdom and founded *Mokṣadharmā*, the religion of salvation. Both these classes of Ṛṣis are said to have sprung from the mind of Brahmā.

Now, all these conceptions are altogether foreign to the Gītā. We have various names like Avyakta, Parameśwara and Paramātmā in the Gītā, but nowhere is it mentioned that Paramātmā is the designation given by the philosophers of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, nor is there any mention of the term *Mahāpuruṣa* at all, as a synonym of God, but the term *Puruṣottama*, i.e., the best of Spirits, occurs in the Gītā (XV. 17-19) as a special designation of God. Similarly the Gītā makes a distinction between the path of Sāṅkhya or *Sanmyāsa* (renunciation) and the path of Yoga or *Karma* (action), but never uses the words *Nivṛtti* and *Pravṛtti* for them, although these latter terms are frequently in vogue in the later Purāṇa literature. Nor does the Gītā ever suggest that these two modes of spiritual culture were introduced by two classes of Ṛṣis expressly mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya. On the contrary, the Gītā tries to reconcile these two paths and holds the Sāṅkhya and Yoga to be the same, not different. Again in the Nārāyaṇīya section the Ṛṣis of the path of action (*Pravṛtti*) are here said to be Vedic scholars, Veda-knowers and expert in Vedic sacrifices, while the Gītāic system of Karmayoga is quite opposed to the ordinary sacrificial religion of the Vedās and insists on the renunciation of desires for heavenly rewards. What is more, the Sāṅkhya of the Gītā is generally identified with wisdom and the Yoga with action, but in the Nārāyaṇīya passage under question, the Ṛṣis of the path of renunciation are said to be versed in Sāṅkhya and Yoga. All these contrasts make it clear that the Gītā belongs to a period when the Nārāyaṇīya or Bhāgavata sect had either



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not arisen at all or had not developed the special doctrines as communicated in these chapters of the Mahábhárata.

288. (iii) Again, the priority of the origin of the Gĭtá is also apparent from the fact that the Náráyana speaks of Ahaṅkára, three guṇas and Mahat as generated from Prakṛti, an idea which approximates the later Sāṅkhya theory, while the Gĭtá does not mention the technical term Mahat at all (except in connection with Brahma when it refers to Prakṛti) and conceives of God as the source of all these concepts. Besides, in the Bhágavata text, Náráyana is said to be the knower of the field, and is superior to Prakṛti. He is regarded as the path of action for the men of action and the path of renunciation for the wise. Prajapati is said to be engaged in benefiting the creatures at the command of Náráyana. A distinction seems to be drawn also between Brahmá and Prajapati. The author of the Gĭtá has nothing to do with Brahmá and Prajapati and even with Náráyana, although he gives us a detailed description of the Field and the knower of the field.

289. (iv) The Brahmanical influence on the Bhágavata religion is unmistakable in this chapter which tells us that Vedas and sacrifices with all their subsidiary parts were created by Brahmá for the sake of the maintenance of the race (lokapatiṣṭhá), that *Mahárudra* was created out of the anger of Brahmá. We are also told that all the gods and Ṛṣis went to Náráyana for receiving instruction as to their rights and obligations and divisions of power and functions, and that after practising penances for a thousand ages of the Devas, they were inspired by Náráyana to perform a *Vaiṣṇava* sacrifice according to the *Vedic* rites, in which offerings were to be made to Náráyana. This transcendental deity was then pleased with their sacrifices and granted them boons for enjoying sacrificial shares offered by men, and these gods were asked to make offerings to Náráyana and also commanded to introduce Vedic rites, etc. A student of Indian religious history will recognize in these passages unmistakable signs of an alliance of the priests or theologians of the Vedic society upholding the religion of sacrifices, with the worshippers of Náráyana or the followers of the Bhágavata religion and one can also trace here the beginning of the Brahmanical device to perpetuate sacrificial ceremonies and to give them the stamp of Divine authority by referring them to the highest antiquity. We have in the Gĭtá III. 9-18, no doubt certain ideas concerning the origin of the sacrifices

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and their relation to the human welfare and the cosmic law, but many scholars consider these verses of the Gītā to be interpolations, and even if they were genuine, there is a spiritualistic outlook and idealistic vein underlying the Gītāic mode of treatment of sacrifices which stands in sharpest contrast to the realistic and mythical description of the Nārāyaṇya passages. (Cf. G. IV. 23-33, XVII. 11-13).

As far as the sacrificial element of the Brahmanical cult is concerned, the poet of the Gītā has expressed himself quite frankly against the popular excesses and hedonistic extravagances of this institution, and favoured an extended application of the idea of sacrifices to the sphere of self-control and self-surrender and self-dedication and other processes of mental discipline and spiritual culture. When one compares these teachings with those of the Vedic religion and the Bhāgavata religion one finds reasons to believe that the Gītā is as little identified with the one as with the other.

290. (v) The enumeration of four Yugas (world-period), viz., Satya, Tretā, Dwāpara and Kali with a proportionate allotment of virtue and vice in each period, is also absent in the Gītā, and proves that the Nārāyaṇya texts belong to a later age. Nārāyaṇa instructs gods to live during the "Kaliyuga" or "dark age" only in those places where the Vedas, sacrifices, penances, truth, restraint of senses and non-violence reside. This is also a clear proof of the Brahmanical origin of this section. In the Gītā on the other hand, we are expressly told that God is not to be obtained by the Vedas, sacrifices and penances (XI. 48, 53), and these latter are given only a subordinate place in the system of spiritual culture.

291. (vi) Nārāyaṇa's appearing in the form of Hayagrīva, embracing Brahmā, praising the latter for his good administration of the world, promise of help in the form of "descents" (*avatāras*) whenever necessary—all these practical conceptions of God point to the realistic-mythical stage of the Indian religious literature, which was developed much later than the Gītā. This impression is confirmed by the praise of Nārāyaṇa at the conclusion of this section, where he is said to be alternately sleeping and waking, and described by the various epithets like *Munjakeśi* (whose hair is brown)—dweller in the ocean, etc.—ideas which are violently in conflict with the Gītāic concept of God. Lastly, the later origin, the Brahmanical character and the pro-Vedic tendencies of this

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Bhāgavata text are evident from the description of Nārāyaṇa as the founder of sacrificial religion, as the enjoyer of the sacrificial offerings and at the same time as the propounder of the path of renunciation.

292. Chapter 342 of the Śāntiparva gives us an explanation of the various names of God, as related by Hari (i.e., Kṛṣṇa) to Arjuna. These names are said to have been declared in the Vedas, in the Upaniṣad, in the Purāṇas, in the Jyotiṣa (astronomy), in the Sāṅkhya and Yoga texts and in the Āyurveda (medical science).

The contents of this chapter equally convince us as to the priority of the Gītā and the lateness of the sectarian Purāṇic text known as the Nārāyaṇīya episode of the Mahābhārata. (i) The Gītā contains no reference to the sciences of astronomy and medicine at all, and the absence of any mention in it about the four Vedas, about the Purāṇas, the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga texts seems to indicate that the fourth Veda (Atharva) and the Purāṇas as well as the philosophical systems of Sāṅkhya and Yoga were unknown to our poet or had not obtained currency or position of authority in his time.

(ii) In the Nārāyaṇīya passage under consideration, Kṛṣṇa is said to bow before Paramātmā who is regarded as the source of Kṛṣṇa's origin. This shows that the human Kṛṣṇa was still distinguished from the Supreme spirit at the time of the Nārāyaṇīya, and in that case the Gītā, which, in our view belongs to a much earlier date, must be interpreted in a manner that makes it free from the Bhāgavata association and from the deification of Kṛṣṇa.

(iii) The concepts of Brahmā as born of the grace of Paramātmā, of Rudra as born of his anger, of Aniruddha, as the creator and destroyer of the worlds (Brahmā and Maheśwara being merely his instruments), prove the sectarian Purāṇic character of this text, as compared with the earlier non-sectarian origin of the Gītā, which has nothing to do with these concepts.

293. (iv) The lateness of the composition of this chapter is also evident from the description of Rudra after the Purāṇic fashion and from the mutual adoration of Rudra and Nārāyaṇa (or Kṛṣṇa) indicating a compromise and rapprochement between the two sects of Śaivas and Vaiṣṇavism, a feature which is altogether absent in the Gītā, as its author must have lived long before the origin of these sects.

294. (v) Four classes of devotees are referred to in this chapter, and single-minded devotees are declared to be the best. In the Gītā, too, four classes of devotees are mentioned, but the wise are declared to be the best, although it is also asserted there that the wise are constantly harmonized and are devoted to the One (ekabhakti). But the wide difference between the Gītāic and the Nārāyaṇīya teachings is apparent from the fact that the latter speaks of both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna as Nara and Nārāyaṇa who are descended on earth in the human form only to lighten the burden of the earth, while in the Gītā there is not only no such hint given, but Arjuna plays a distinctively human role and the divinity of Kṛṣṇa is at least doubtful.

295. (iv) This chapter supplies us with the meanings of the designations that used to be employed in those days to represent Kṛṣṇa or Nārāyaṇa, these meanings being mostly derived from the etymology of the words and sometimes explained by fanciful or mythological stories. For examples, we find here the meanings of the names Nārāyaṇa, Pṛṣṇigarbha, Dāmodara, Vāsudeva, Viṣṇu, Keśava and Hṛṣīkeśa, of which the first three are altogether absent in the Gītā, while the remaining four are interpreted even in this section of the Nārāyaṇīya in a spiritual significance as conveying the general attributes of God, divested of all historical references and personal associations with the life of Kṛṣṇa. We may conclude from this that at the time of the Gītā, Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu were designations of God, and had no sectarian connotation, as claimed by the Vaiṣṇavas. Even the names Keśava and Hṛṣīkeśa may have been applied to Kṛṣṇa when he was deified and were probably introduced in the Gītā at the time of its incorporation into the Epic. It may be that these last two names had originally a personal association with Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, and were then given a spiritual interpretation by the author of the Nārāyaṇīya.

296. The transition to Chapter 343 is effected by a fanciful story as to how the fire and the moon were born of the same source, in order to explain the significance of the term Hṛṣīkeśa. Here, too, the Brahmanical influence on the Bhāgavata sect is traceable beyond dispute. The moon is identified with the Brāhmaṇa and the fire with the Kṣatriya. Superiority of the Brahmins to Kṣatriyas is repeatedly proclaimed, and offering *dhutis* (sacrificial meals) to Brahmins is said to dispense with the necessity of performing sacrifices. A long series of mythical stories is



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related to show the power and the glory of the Brahmins. The mythical portion in the beginning of this chapter seems to have been interpolated by the revivers of Brāhmaṇism as against the ascendancy of the Kṣatriyas, and bears all the characteristics of the later sectarian Purāṇa literature. The Gītāic view of the caste as well as the Gītāic ideal of religion is diametrically opposed to the spirit of this section of the Nārāyaṇīya and speaks for a much earlier origin of the Gītā in a purer and calmer non-sectarian atmosphere and in a loftier and sublimer altitude of the Upaniṣadic age.

297. Resuming the topic of the last chapter, Kṛṣṇa explains to Arjuna the meanings of such names of God as Hari, *Rtadhama*, Govinda, *Sipiviṣṭa*, Aja, Satya, *Sāttvata*, Kṛṣṇa, *Vaikuntha*, Achyuta, *Adhokṣaja*, *Ghṛtārchitta*, *Tṛdhātu*, *Vṛṣa*, *Vṛṣākapi*, Anādi, Amadhya, Ananta, *Śuchiśrava*, *Ekadanta* (or *Ekaśṛṅga*), *Trikakud*, *Virīṇchi*, Kapila, *Hiranya-garbha*, *Hayagriva*, *Muñjakeśa*, *Khanda-Paraśu*, etc. In connection with this chapter we may note :—

(i) That most of these names (viz., those which are italicized), are absent in the Gītā, although some of them have their root in the earlier Vedic literature. It seems highly probable that during this period all the Vedic names for Viṣṇu and Purāṇic names for Nārāyaṇa were being freely applied to Kṛṣṇa, who must have been already deified and identified with the Vedic deity Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa, which was not the case at the time of the composition of the Gītā. Of the rest, some are abstract names connotative of the attributes of God, which were the common property of all Indian scriptures, and there remain thus only the names Govinda and Kṛṣṇa together with the two mentioned in the last chapter (Keśava and Hṛṣīkeśa) as the irreducible minimum of accord between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya in this respect. Certainly this is not a sufficiently strong evidence for accepting the Bhāgavata interpretation of the Gītā and ascribing its origin to the same sect of Vaiṣṇavas which produced the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata. We are inclined to believe that these names (viz., Keśava, Hṛṣīkeśa and Vāsudeva) were absent in the original Gītā, but later on introduced by the Vaiṣṇava editors when they inserted the Gītā in the body of the Epic. But we admit at the same time that there is no inherent impossibility in the supposition that these names may have been of a non-sectarian significance in their origin and may have been applied to Kṛṣṇa in the original



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Gītā by the poet himself on account of his acquaintance with the Epic literature of the time, when both Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna were regarded as human heroes and associated with various names having no divine connotation at all.

298. (ii) Beside the mythical names which evidently belong to the Purāṇa literature, we find here such names as Sāttvata, Hiraṇyagarbha, Kapila and Viriñchi, which are generally associated with the Bhāgavata, Vedānta and Sāṅkhya systems of philosophy or theology respectively. It is significant that while the Bhāgavata religion is also called the Sāttvata religion, as it is supposed to have been accepted by the Sāttvata race (which is held to be contemporary with the Vṛṣṇi family of the Yādava dynasty), the derivation of the term Sāttvata, as given in this section, is purely spiritualistic (being derived from Sattva, the highest quality) and altogether devoid of any historical relation or racial association. Similarly Kapila is closely connected here with the solar circle and the Vidyāmātā (the goddess of wisdom). Whatever may be the motives of the author in offering such explanations for these names, it is unquestionable that the absence of all these designations of God in the Gītā indicates its priority of origin and freedom from sectarian influences.

(iii) That this chapter had a sectarian origin at an age much later than that of the Gītā is also apparent from the reference to 21,000 branches of the Ṛgveda, 1,000 branches of the same, and 568 and 37 branches of the Yajurveda, to the Atharvaveda with five Kalpas, to the psalms and their tunes, to Pada, Akṣara, and their divisions, to the Pañchālas learning the study of the Veda with their divisions from Bāmadeva, to Maṇḍarī Gālava as the founder of the science of Vedic prosody, to king Brahmadatta and his minister Pundarikā as attaining Yoga, and from the remark that all the achievements of these sages were due to the grace of Nārāyaṇa, the original form of Kṛṣṇa. The same conclusion is confirmed by the allusion here to Kṛṣṇa's birth in the form of Nara-Nārāyaṇa in the family of Dharma, to the Purāṇic story of Prajāpati Dakṣa's performance of sacrifice at which Rudra was not invited and to the excited contest between Rudra and Nārāyaṇa. It is needless to repeat that the poet of the Gītā had nothing to do with these mythical representations of sectarian quarrels.

299. The next chapter of the Śāntiparva (chapter 344) refers us back to Nārada's visit to Śvetadvīpa and relates how and why he

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went to see Nara and Náráyaṇa again at the Badarikáśram after obtaining the vision of Náráyaṇa.

(i) Lord Náráyaṇa is now represented as the soul of all beings and Arjuna is said to be fortunate in having Lord Vásudeva, adored by the three worlds, as his friend. This shows how Kṛṣṇa Vásudeva has by this time been completely identified with the cosmic god Náráyaṇa.

(ii) After the model of the Gītā (VII. 8-9), Náráyaṇa is said to be the source from which the fluidity of water, the heat of the sun, the touch of the air, the sound of the space (or ether), etc., are produced, but unlike the Gītā, the Náráyaṇīya speaks here of a place called *Sadbhūtotpádaka* (the source of existing beings) where Náráyaṇa lives with *Vidyá* and also of the sun as the gate of all the worlds. We are told that those who seek liberation first enter the solar world, where, their bodies burnt, they become invisible and atomic, and then enter into Náráyaṇa dwelling in the centre of the solar region; coming out of Náráyaṇa they pass successively through Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa in the forms of mind and Jīva, after which, being freed from the guṇas, they enter into Vásudeva, the knower of the field, who is the seat of all and free from the guṇas (cf. Gītā VIII. 23-28). Here we have not only a Purānic mode of the description of the route to liberation, but also an express declaration of Vásudeva as distinct from, and even higher than, Náráyaṇa. The Vaiṣṇava worship of Kṛṣṇa must have attained such a prominence at this age as to cast into shade the original form of Vásudeva, known as Náráyaṇa.

300. (iii) The representation of Nara and Náráyaṇa in this chapter as brighter than the sun, bearing the signs of Chakra (discus) and Śrīvatsa (a mark on the breast), resembling the White Islanders and as the manifest form in which the unmanifest Náráyaṇa of the Śvetadvīpa was reflected, and as practising austere penances for the welfare of those forms of Náráyaṇa which will be manifest in three worlds, is a sufficient indication of its Purānic character and sectarian origin. And the same is also true of the description of Náráyaṇa as practising penances by an altar with upraised hands, standing on one leg and studying the Vedas with its subsidiary parts (Aṅgas). We may note that the Gītā (a) nowhere speaks of God as an ascetic, (b) makes no mention of the distinction between the paths of *Pravṛtti* (action) and *Nivṛtti*

(renunciation), (c) never represents God as a hermit, but always as an ever-active Spirit, (d) nor mentions the *aṅgas* or parts of the Vedas, as is done in this chapter. What could be more reasonable than to infer that the Gītā belongs to an earlier period and a purer idealistic atmosphere than the realistic-mythical text of the Nārāyaṇīya?

(iv) In support of our position, it may be further mentioned that Nārāyaṇa is not only described here as affectionately disposed towards the devotees, but also as fond of the Brāhmaṇas (Vipras) which, however, may also mean the wise and not the priest, and that God is said to be visible in the body of Aniruddha, a concept which is altogether foreign to the Gītāic concept of God.

301. (v) Another conspicuous feature in the teachings of Nārāyaṇa in this chapter is that while those who are equipped with metaphysical wisdom and single-mindedly devoted to God are said to attain God, and the man of whole-hearted devotion is said to be the best of all, as in the Gītā (VII. 17-19) there is not a single reference here to the fulfilment of duty, or the ideal of Karma-Yoga which distinguishes the teachings of the Gītā. The reason is that the poet of the Gītā, breathing the spirit of the Upaniṣadic atmosphere, upholds a life of all-sided perfection, consisting in a balanced harmony of all the powers of the mind and all the demands of human nature, embracing wisdom, devotion and service, while the author of the Nārāyaṇīya betrays his one-sided narrowness of ideal as well as his sectarian bias by emphasizing faith in Nārāyaṇa and single-minded worship of him above everything else, as is generally the case with all later Purāṇic literature.

302. When we turn to chapter 345, the influence of the sacrificial practice of the Brāhmaṇical or the Vedic religion on the Bhāgavatas appears to have reached its culmination in a naïve dogmatic defence of the worship of Devas and Pitṛs with the help of mythical stories. Nārada speaks of learning from Nārāyaṇa himself that the Devas should be worshipped and of adoring Nārāyaṇa through the Daiva, which is the best of sacrifices and the essence of the eternal Supreme Soul. Nārada traces his own descent from Nārāyaṇa through Brahmā and Prajāpati Dakṣa, and says that men worship Nārāyaṇa through father, mother, and grandfather in Pitṛyajña. Thus Nārāyaṇa is indirectly adored both in offering sacrifices to gods and the Manes. Incidentally there is a reference to the war between the Devas and the Asuras,

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in course of which the Devas forgot the Vedas, and also to the mutual relation among the Devas and Pitṛs, and to the origin of Pīṇdas (rice-balls or oblations offered to Pitṛs), which leads to the mythical account of the incarnation of *Varāha* (i.e., Nārāyaṇa descending in the form of a boar). As all this is altogether absent in the Gītā and contrary to the spirit of its teachings, the significance of this chapter lies in the fact that it gives us a glimpse into the early history of Indian religious movements, especially of the period when the Bhāgavata sect and the Brahmanical order must have come into contact with each other and tried to adjust their mutual claims by adopting an attitude of compromise or give and take. It is specially to be noted that the Bhāgavata religion began in all probability as a movement of protest against Vedic sacrifices and worship of many gods, by enjoining wholehearted devotion to one God with certain modes of moral discipline and spiritual culture. Now, the theological concept of incarnations of Nārāyaṇa as well as the mythical account of Nārada's visit to the White Island seems to be devices contrived by priestly scholars of the orthodox society to bring about an amalgamation of the powerful Bhāgavata movement with their own Vedic cult of sacrifices to gods and Pitṛs, a policy in which the Bhāgavata worshippers seem to have knowingly acquiesced or unknowingly lent themselves to be ensnared. This alliance of the Brahmins with the Bhāgavatas was all the more necessary and practicable at the time when the Buddhistic church was asserting her own supreme authority, and not only preaching doctrines that threatened to destroy the traditional beliefs in God and in the efficacy of sacrifices, but also introducing ideas and founding institutions of an ascetic and monastic kind which tended to undermine the whole structure of Vedic society based on caste and family organization. In our view of the case, the Gītā represents a stage of spiritual life and thought far removed from this age of worldly compromises and diplomatic alliances in the religious history of India, and even prior to the origin of the religious movement inaugurated by Gautama Buddha.

### SECTION IV. THE PROOFS OF THE GĪTĀ BEING A MUCH EARLIER WORK THAN THE BHĀGAVATA RELIGION

*Tilak's views criticized (Śāntiparva, chapters 346-348)*

303. Chapter 346 is more important for our purpose in so far



as it expressly states that the glory of Nārāyaṇa has been briefly described in the Hari-Gītā (referring most probably to the Bhagavad-Gītā). As there is not a single reference to Nārāyaṇa in any verse of the Gītā, and as the contents of the Nārāyaṇīya text differ as widely as possible in many respects from those of the Gītā in spite of their resemblance in a few points, we are justified in inferring from this very mention of the Gītā in the Nārāyaṇīya section as the original source of the religion of Nārāyaṇa that the Gītā had already become famous and authoritative as a code of devotional culture, and that the Vaiṣṇavas and Bhāgavatas were already trying to appropriate it for their own purpose and to obtain from the author of the Gītā, who was perhaps regarded as the highest competent judge, his sanction or stamp of approval for their sectarian literature of later ages, by showing the essential agreement between the doctrines of the Gītā and those of their own works. There are other significant hints in this chapter showing the later origin of the Nārāyaṇīya text, viz., (i) Vedavyāsa, the author of the Mahābhārata, is now identified with Nārāyaṇa and called Nārāyaṇa's self. (ii) Nārāyaṇa is said to be the dispenser of the Vedas and to be worshipped by Brahmins and declared by the wise followers of the Sāṅkhya, and by the Yogis, as the first cause of the three worlds, and to be the slayer of Madhukaitabha, assuming four forms (Vāsudeva, etc.). (iii) The militant attitude of the author in this section, condemning in strong terms those who are enemies of Nārāyaṇa, also speaks for its sectarian character. (iv) Besides, Nārada is said to have communicated this glory of Nārāyaṇa on a previous occasion to Brhaspati, the preceptor of the gods, in the presence of Kṛṣṇa, Bhīṣma, Pāṇḍavas and Mahārṣis. One should remark here that Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva is supposed to be present on various occasions when the form and the teachings of Nārāyaṇa are related, and yet no hint is given whatsoever in these passages as to the identification of this human Kṛṣṇa with Nārāyaṇa (*vide* chapter 348).

304. Similarly in chapter 347, there are abundant traces to show that the Nārāyaṇīya text was composed much later than the Gītā. (i) The philosophical theory of evolution and dissolution as described in this chapter is much more detailed and developed in the realistic direction; the concepts of *Aniruddha* and *Vidyā* are associated with God, who is said to be on the waters and to resort to *Yoganidra* (sleep consisting in Yoga), meditating on the creation of the universe; *Ahaṅkāra* is identified not with Aniruddha but



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with four-mouthed Brahmá. (ii) Again we hear of the lotus-eyed Hiranyagarbha sitting on the lotus, of the birth of two demons Madhu and Kaitabha, who stole away the Vedas from Brahmá out of spite, of Brahmá's prayer to Nārāyaṇa, mentioning how the former was born out of the latter seven times from the mind, the eyes, the speech, the ear, the nose, the egg and the naval lotus in different periods, and of the restoration of the Vedas from the demons by Nārāyaṇa in the form of Hayagrīva. All these references not only remind us of the Purānic myths but lead us to suspect that the Epic editor is here referring to the revival of the Vedic or Brahmanical authority after the religious revolution brought about by the advent and growth of Buddhism which upset the orthodox society. The poet of the Gītā has no such interest in the establishment of the Vedic religion or in the restoration of the Brahmanical authority. (iii) It is noteworthy that the concluding verses of this chapter include certain teachings which seem to have been borrowed from the Gītā, viz., Nārāyaṇa is said to be the principal cause and the activity, the presiding deity, the various instruments, the diverse effects and the fate (or supernatural agency) of all things (cf. Gītā XVIII. 13-14, describing five-fold causes), and to be the fragrance in earth, moisture in water, lustre in the brilliant, touch in the air, sound in ether, mind in nature (Gītā VII. 8-9), and also the abode of fame, prosperity, etc. (G. X. 34). But the sectarian and the Brahmanical influence on this text as well as its late origin is evident in the verses where Nārāyaṇa is said to assume whatever form he likes for accomplishing his objects, to be the receptacle of the Vedas, penances and sacrifices, to be the essence of religion characterized by *Pravṛtti* (action) and *Nivṛtti* (renunciation), of the metaphysical reality discussed by enquirers according to causal arguments, and finally to be the support of all who make offerings in honour of the Devas and Pitṛs. (iv) Besides, Nārāyaṇa is designated *Vāsudeva* as he is the dwelling-place of all, and realized in the heart by those sages who resort to the power of wisdom, a feature which shows at once the similarity and the difference between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya, for while the Gītā speaks of God (*Vāsudeva*) as attainable by the wise among the devotees, it does not so much as mention Nārāyaṇa, not to speak of identifying him with *Vāsudeva*, nor does it interpret the designation *Vāsudeva* in this peculiar way of the Nārāyaṇīya.

305. Chapter 348 of the Śāntiparva throws a good deal of light on the mythology or history of the development of the Bhāgavata religion and has been particularly utilized by Mr. Tilak and other scholars who wanted to establish the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā. The chapter becomes all the more prominent because of its reference to the Gītā in two different verses. We would do well to note the outstanding features of this section :

(i) The opening lines are eulogistic of the religion of the Ekāntin, the followers of which are said to be distinguished from those who are free from the Guṇas and devoid of merits and demerits. Nārāyaṇa himself is pleased with the single-minded devotees and accepts their worship, and they are absorbed in his fourth form Vāsudeva without adoring the three other forms like Aniruddha and others (i.e., Pradyumna and Saṅkarṣaṇa). There is nothing so sublime and so dear to Nārāyaṇa as the religion of Ekāntin. The great-souled devotees of this religion undoubtedly attain a higher goal than the Brahmins who resort to the *Yatidharma* (religion of renunciation) and regularly study the Vedas. We must concede the similarity between the Gītā and Nārāyaṇa in these passages in so far as the Gītā makes a distinction between the devoted worshippers of one God and the meditators on the unmanifest Absolute, free from all attributes, and speaks of the superiority of the mode of culture practised by the former (XII. 1-4), and upholds the supremacy of the religion of devotion above that of Vedic study and renunciation. But there is this difference between the two texts, that the Gītā does not use the word Nārāyaṇa, nor speak of his four forms, Vāsudeva, Aniruddha, etc.

306. (ii) In reply to the questions, which god or Mahārṣi declared the religion of *Ekāntin*, when it originated and how it is to be practised, the editor of the Epic tells us that this very religion was sung by the Lord (Gītā Bhagavatā Swayam), when Arjuna was overwhelmed with a feeling of depression in the battle between the Kurus and the Pāṇavas. This religion is said to be very difficult to penetrate and not intelligible to the ignorant. This reference to Kṛṣṇa's discourses to Arjuna at the time of the Kuru-Pāṇava war is supposed to hint at the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, and to prove that the Nārāyaṇīya teaches the same religion as that described in the Gītā. There is no denying the fact that the Gītā in its present form is represented as a dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the battlefield of Kurukṣetra and there are some

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points in common between the teachings of these two works, e.g., the idea of whole-hearted devotion to one God is almost the same in both, and in both, the practice of this ideal is described to be difficult and such devotees are said to be rare (G. VII. 3, 19; XII. 5-7). But the differences from the Gītā ideal and mode of religious practices which we have noted in every chapter of the Nārāyaṇīya are so great that we are forced to consider if this reference in the Nārāyaṇīya may not be accounted for by one or other of the following alternative interpretations :—(i) There may be no reference to the Gītā at all in this passage but to a supposed conversation between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the eve of the Kurukṣetra war, from which the new religion of the Bhāgavatas is said to have sprung, or (ii) this verse may have been interpolated by the Bhāgavata editors of the Epic in order to prove the antiquity and authority of the Nārāyaṇīya religion by citing the Gītā in support of the teachings of their own school and thereby to establish the Vaiṣṇava origin and character of the Gītā itself, a motive which also seems to have actuated the editors in inserting the verses IV. 1-2 in the Epic Gītā.<sup>1</sup> It may allude to the teachings of the Gītā so far as they are in agreement with the Nārāyaṇīya doctrines, the differences between them being either ignored or not considered sufficiently important to be taken notice of. (iii) The Nārāyaṇīya doctrines may have been originally derived from the Gītā and have contained essentially the same elements as the Gītā, which formed perhaps the earliest, purest and non-sectarian exposition of the Bhāgavata religion, but the later sectarian Vaiṣṇavas and their alliance with the Brahmanical scholars may have been responsible for the introduction in the Nārāyaṇīya of foreign elements of a sectarian and Purāṇic nature, which have so transformed the Bhāgavata text as to make its teachings appear widely different from those of the Gītā. Now, the first of these alternatives is not impossible in itself, but as we have no recorded evidence of a religious discourse between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the battle of Kurukṣetra except the Mahābhārata and its episode known as Bhagavad-Gītā, we may reject this version as more fictitious than real. The second hypothesis is no doubt ingenious and therefore plausible, but it is vitiated by the same fault as Mr. Subbā Rāo's theory about the allusion in the Brahmasūtra and Purāṇas to the Mahābhārata and as Mr. Tilak's hypothesis about the insertion by Vyāsa of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Tilak's explanation of G. XIII. 5.

verse G. XIII. 5, in his edition of the Epic, viz., that it attributes a dishonest motive or the vice of similitude to the editors of the Bhārata Epic. We cannot therefore subscribe to this alternative. According to the last two interpretations, of course, the mention of the Gītā in this chapter must be regarded as a proof of the fact that the Nārāyaṇīya doctrines were originally borrowed or derived from the Gītā.

But the third alternative noted above is not only free from any historical impossibility or speculative inconsistency, but also agrees entirely with our hypothesis of the development of the Bhāgavata or Vaiṣṇava religion from a non-sectarian to a sectarian stage and with our view that the Gītā belongs to a much earlier age than the Nārāyaṇīya. We may thus conclude from the references to the Gītā in this chapter that the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Śāntiparva like many other episodes of the Mahābhārata has undergone a process of transformation in as much as its teachings were originally derived from and closely similar to the religious and philosophical doctrines of the Gītā, but were later on enlarged and modified as a result of the sectarian tendencies of the later Vaiṣṇava editors, who adopted many features of the Brahmanical cult, and lost much of the purity and simplicity of the earlier Bhāgavata movement. This provisional hypothesis will, however, require substantial verification with further materials derived from scholarly researches of Indologists.

307. (iii) There follows a list of teachers of this *Ekāntin* religion who communicated this message to gods and to mankind in successive stages of the world-periods. We have already met with one such list in chapter 340 and noticed how it differs from that in the Gītā (IV. 1-2). But the succession of teachers enumerated in the present chapter is much fuller and more elaborate after the *Purāṇic* fashion than in any of the previous passages. We are told that Nārāyaṇa created this religion of single-minded devotees in the Satyayuga in conformity with the Sāmaveda and since then there have been periodical appearances and disappearances of this religion from age to age. It is interesting to note that seven cycles of the world's existence are mentioned in accordance with the seven births of Brahmā out of the mouth, the eye, the speech, the ear, the nose, the egg, and the naval seat of Nārāyaṇa. During the first period, Brahmā followed a religion of his own making and worshipped Pitṛs and Devas. Having been communicated to



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Phenapa, Baikhánasa and other sages, and lastly to the moon in succession, this religion disappeared. During the second period, Mahádeva or Rudra, who is expert in Yoga, learnt it from the moon-god, taught it to the great Ṛṣis of the Bálakhilya family, when it disappeared again under the influence of Máya of Náráyana. During the third period Náráyana himself discovered that religion and communicated it to Mahārṣi Suparṇa owing to his austerity, discipline and self-control (Tapas, Niyama, and Dama). He used to read it thrice every day and hence it is known to scholars as the Trisuparṇa religion, it is declared in the Ṛgveda and is very difficult to practise. From the sage Suparṇa, it was learnt by the god of air, who is the life-breath of the Universe, and then communicated to Mahārṣi Bighaṣasi, who gave it to the Ocean. Then it disappeared again. During the fourth period, Brahmá was inspired by Náráyana with truth, energy and eternal religion, with the help of which the former was asked to create the Satya-yuga. Thus Brahmá received the supreme religion together with the Áraṇyakas, Vedás and Upaniṣads (the secrets) from Náráyana.

Thus the golden age and the eternal religion were founded for the first time during this period. After worshipping Náráyana, Brahmá taught it to Manu, son of *Swaruchiṣi*, from whom it was received in succession by his son Śankhapada, and grandson Subarnábha. During the fifth period Náráyana himself taught it to Brahmá again, after which it was communicated by the latter to *Sanatkumār*, Biran, Raibhya, Kuṣṇináma in succession till it disappeared again. The sixth period witnessed the succession of teachers in the order of Náráyana, Brahmá, Mahārṣis Bahirṣad, Jyeṣṭha, a Brahmin versed in the Sáma Veda, king Avikampa. During the seventh period, we are told, the religion was taught by Náráyana to Brahmá, and from Brahmá it was transmitted in succession to Dakṣa, Áditya, Vivaswán, who taught it to Manu in the beginning of Tretá. Manu gave it to Ikṣvákū, who preached it throughout the world. Since then it has been prevalent in the world and will be merged in Náráyana at the dissolution of the universe. It is added that this *Ekāntin* religion was previously declared at the time of expounding the religion of *Yati* (ascetic recluse) in the *Hari-Gītā* and that Nárada received the selfsame religion from Náráyana.

308. Let us first see what are the points of resemblance between the Gītā and this passage of the Nárāyaṇīya section, which may



justify one in identifying the religion of the Gītā with that of the Bhāgavatas.

Mr. Tilak has laid stress on two points in this passage, viz., (i) That the list of teachers who appeared during the last or seventh period of the growth of Nārāyaṇīya is very similar to that given in the fourth chapter of the Gītā (IV. 1-2), where we are told that Kṛṣṇa taught the doctrine of Yoga to Vivaswān, Vivaswān to Manu, and Manu to Ikṣvāku. (2) This religion is said to have been described in the Hari-Gītā at the time of teaching the *Yatidharma* (religion of ascetics). Now these two passages do not afford us sufficient evidence to enable us to pronounce a judgment on the relation between the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section.

With regard to the first point it is to be noted that (a) while the Gītā would trace the origin of its doctrines direct from Kṛṣṇa, Vivaswān, Manu, and Ikṣvāku in succession, the Nārāyaṇīya section introduces Brahmā, Dakṣa and Āditya as intermediate links between Nārāyaṇa and Vivaswān; (b) that while according to the Nārāyaṇīya, the religion of Ekāntin was taught by Vivaswān to Manu and by Manu to Ikṣvāku, in the beginning of Tretā, according to the Gītā it was communicated by Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna about the end of Dwāpara; (c) that although the Gītā speaks of Kṛṣṇa's births from age to age in order to help the righteous and destroy the unrighteous and to establish law, it nowhere mentions the existence or the evolution of the religion of Ekāntin in different cycles of creation, (d) that the Gītā not only does not recognise the Nārāyaṇīya theory of creation, according to which Brahmā, the lord of creation, sprang out of the mouth, the eye, the speech, the ear, the nose, the ovule and the naval seat of Nārāyaṇa respectively in the several world-periods, but also omits all reference to Brahmā, Chandra, Rudra, Vāyu, Samudra, and Sanatkumara as the teachers of the religion of devotion, (e) that as in the previous chapters, so in the present chapter of the Nārāyaṇīya, we meet with mythical and semi-historical allusions which are conspicuous by their absence in the Gītā. From all these considerations we are led to differ from Mr. Tilak as to the identity of the religion of the Gītā and that of the Nārāyaṇīya.

309. The same objections hold good against the second point urged by Tilak, viz., the reference of the Hari-Gītā in this section. We may well doubt if the *Hari-Gītā* mentioned here is identical with the *Bhagavad-Gītā* at all. In any case we have seen abundant

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reasons to believe that the teachings of the two works—Bhagavad-Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya—are very different in some fundamental features, as the former has nothing to do with Nārāyaṇa as the supreme god and his forms, Nara, Hari, and Kṛṣṇa, nor with the four *Vyāhas* with Vāsudeva at the head, which play an important part in the latter. Besides, the Gītā neither teaches the religion of ascetics (Yatidharma) nor identifies itself with any particular sect of worshippers of Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu, calling themselves by the technical name of Ekāntins, Vaiṣṇavas or Bhāgavatas, nor is there any allusion to the *Hari-Gītā* in our text. It is therefore a perfectly gratuitous assumption on the part of Mr. Tilak to hold that the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya sections were works of the same author or products of the same religious movement called Bhāgavatism. We can confirm our conclusion from the additional fact that the Nārāyaṇīya passage under consideration tells us how Yudhiṣṭhira asked Nārada as to the origin and the growth of the Ekāntin religion in the presence of Vāsudeva and Bhīṣma among a group of learned sages, and yet does not give the slightest indication of this Vāsudeva being one with the Nārāyaṇa of the Ekāntins or the Bhāgavatas.

If Prof. Hopkins' view, that the first two or three verses in the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Gītā were later interpolations and not genuine parts of the original Gītā, is correct, as we think it is, the main support of Mr. Tilak's arguments in favour of the identity of the authorship of the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya teachings falls to the ground. We may note that Prof. Richard Garbe has built up an erroneous hypothesis as regards the age of the Gītā on the same doubtful verses in the beginning of the fourth chapter of the Gītā. It is, however, difficult to say at this stage of our knowledge of the ancient literature of India whether the verses IV. 1-2 in the Gītā were composed before the more detailed and fanciful account of the succession of teachers of the religion of Ekāntin as given in the Nārāyaṇīya passage in question, or whether the Nārāyaṇīya list of teachers was already present when a Bhāgavata editor of the Mahābhārata interpolated the verses IV. 1-2 of the Gītā in imitation of the Epic account, with a view to creating an impression of the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā and of its similarity with the Nārāyaṇīya text of Mahābhārata as regards the succession of these teachers and some of the principal doctrines. Personally I am inclined to accept the latter alternative.

310. (iv) There are a few significant references of this chapter of the Náráyāṇīya episode which require more than a cursory notice. (i) The religion of Ekántin is said to have been created by Náráyāṇa in the Satyayuga in conformity with the Sáma Veda. Evidently, the Sáma Veda was held in high regard at the time of the origin of the Náráyāṇīya religion. It is, however, remarkable that the Gítá, too, speaks of the Sáma as the best of the Vedas, and also upholds the Bṛhat-Sáma among the Sámas (G. X. 22, 35). If there was any connection between the Gítá and the Náráyāṇīya religion, it is their common esteem of the Sáma Veda that will supply an important clue to the discovery of this fact for the future historian of our ancient literature. Mr. Tilak makes capital out of this reference to the Sáma Veda in the Gítá in determining the age of our text. I would like to remark that the explicit statement of the Náráyāṇīya to the effect that the earliest stage of the Ekántin religion was in conformity with the Sáma Veda seems to suggest that the teachings of the Gítá, which is evidently the work of a poet belonging to the Sáma Veda school, had something to do with the origin of the Bhágavata religion or at least supplied in some form or other the original data, of which the teachings of the Náráyāṇīya section were the later development.

311. (ii) Another interesting and at the same time important point of similarity between the teachings of the Gítá and those of the Náráyāṇīya may be gathered from the reference to Maharṣi Suparṇa's practising austerity, regularity, and self-restraint (Tapasyá, Niyama, and Dama) and consequently receiving the Ekántin religion from Náráyāṇa on three occasions. The Gítá also repeatedly enjoins the practice of these virtues and we find one of the Indian scholars (Dr. H. C. Ray Chaudhury) maintaining that since these virtues are particularly mentioned in the Chhándogya Up. (III. 17), Kṛṣṇa, son of Devaki, referred to in this Upaniṣad, must be identical with the Kṛṣṇa of the Gítá. Without committing ourselves to any opinion on this either way, we may note that if the Gítá and the Náráyāṇīya are both products of the Sáma Veda scholars, their intimate relation with the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, which is itself attached to the Sáma Veda, will follow as a necessary corollary.

312. (iii) There is still a third point of resemblance to be noticed between the Gítá and the Náráyāṇīya, viz., the teachings of both are ascribed to a divine Person in their origin and are supposed

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to form the essence of the Vedic religion and to be difficult to practise. For example, in the present section of the Nārāyaṇīya, Brahmā is said to have taken the best religion with all its secrets along with the Āraṇyakas and Vedas, coming out of the mouth of Nārāyaṇa, while in the Gītā the secret wisdom is said to have been sung by the Vedic Ṛṣis in manifold verses and in Brahmasūtras full of reasoning.

313. (iv) We have, however, to note that the religion of Ekāntin is said to be observed by those who resort to ascetic practices (Sannyāsadharma), while the religion of the Gītā is anti-ascetic before everything. But it must be mentioned at the same time that the Nārāyaṇīya doctrines include performance of good deeds with the spirit of non-violence (Ahimsā and Satkarma) and the followers of the Ekāntin religion are said to be absolutely free from hatred (himsā), friendly to all beings, endowed with philosophical knowledge (Tattvajñāna), and these features find their parallel in the teachings of the Gītā.

314. (v) Again we learn from this passage that some followers of the Nārāyaṇīya religion worship Nārāyaṇa in the form of Aniruddha, some in the forms of Aniruddha and Pradyumna, some in the forms of Aniruddha, Pradyumna and Saṅkarṣaṇa and others in the form of Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Saṅkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva. Mr. Tilak has evidently been puzzled by the fact that the Gītā does not mention these Vyūhas at all, and he has sought to save his theory of the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā by reading into the word "*Pūrve Chattvārah*" in G. X. 6, a meaning which is not only in conflict with the traditional views of commentators, but wholly unjustifiable according to our findings about the relation of the Bhagavad-Gītā to the Nārāyaṇīya text. While admitting with Mr. Tilak the difficulty of accepting the traditional interpretation of this verse, we are unable to agree with him when he suggests that the "previous four" persons referred to in this verse of the Gītā must be interpreted to mean the four forms or *Vyūhas* of Nārāyaṇa, mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya text, viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha, for there is no express reference to Nārāyaṇa and his four forms anywhere in the Gītā, and Kṛṣṇa could not speak of these four forms, including Vāsudeva, as sprung from his spiritual nature (*Madbhāva mānasā jātāh*), as he himself is identified by the Bhāgavatas with Vāsudeva, the first form. Moreover, the author of the Gītā, on the admission of Mr. Tilak himself, is a pure mono-



theist and even leans towards pantheism, and it is inconceivable that he should give any support to the Bhāgavata doctrine of *four* different Divinities, as hinted in this Nārāyaṇya passage. Even supposing for the sake of argument that our poet knew of a distinction between four *Vyūhas*, but belonged to that particular sect of the Bhāgavatas which worshipped Vāsudeva as the only form of God, it is strange that he should not have mentioned this doctrine even once and given more prominence to the person of Vāsudeva as distinct from the other three forms in a single verse in any of the chapters of the Gītā. Besides, the Nārāyaṇya passage under consideration, which evidently implies that there were four different sects or classes of Nārāyaṇa-worshippers, never speaks of the worship of Vāsudeva alone, but associates him with the other three forms, while the worshippers of a single form are said to be devoted to Aniruddha, who seems to have priority over Vāsudeva. Mr. Tilak himself has noticed the peculiarity of the Gītā in this respect and admitted that the poet of the Gītā differed from all these sects of the Bhāgavatas in so far as he recognised Vāsudeva and all other forms as having originated from the Supreme Spirit. But does not this admission of Mr. Tilak amount to a rejection of his position as to the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā as the latter does not support nor accept the doctrine of *Vyūhas*, which is an important and ancient doctrine of the Bhāgavatas according to the Mahābhārata and other authorities?

315. We thus find on a careful analysis of the relevant chapters of the Nārāyaṇya section in the Mokṣadharma part of the Śānti-parva that the Bhāgavata religion which had its root in this episode of the Mahābhārata is of much later origin than the Bhagavad-Gītā Upaniṣad even in its present form, as incorporated in the great Epic of India. The Gītā had most probably been already recognized as an authoritative text-book of spiritual monotheism based on a harmony of Vedānta, Sāṅkhya and Yoga modes of ethical and philosophical discipline (not as yet developed into a system of philosophy) before the Nārāyaṇya sections were composed by an advocate of the Bhāgavata religion. It may be in the interest of this sect that the original Gītā was re-handled by a propagandist under Brahmanical influences and inserted in the body of the Mahābhārata at a time when the new Buddhist movement appeared as a formidable rival or opponent of Brāhmaṇism.



### CHAPTER III

## THE UPANIṢADS AND THE GĪTĀ IN RELATION TO THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

### SECTION I. TILAK'S DIFFERENTIATION OF THE GĪTĀ FROM THE UPANIṢADS WITH REGARD TO THE BHAKTI ELEMENT

316. According to Mr. Tilak, the presence of Bhakti or worship of God in the human form in the Gītā is due to the Bhāgavata influence. We have found in the last Book that the Gītā resembles the Upaniṣads of old not merely in its setting, but in the spirit and the contents of its teachings as well. Mr. Tilak has, however, discussed the question of the relation between the Upaniṣads and the Gītā only to discover that behind many points of similarity there are important points of difference between the two. He concludes that the concept of Brahma in the Gītā is based on the Upaniṣads, but it is not an exact copy of the Upaniṣadic philosophy (idealism), but is rather combined with the idea of devotion to Vāsudeva and supplemented by the Sāṅkhya view of creation involving the concept of a distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal and by the Vedic religion of Karma-Yoga, established on a popular basis. It is not therefore proper, so thinks Mr. Tilak, to twist or stretch the meaning of the Gītā from a sectarian standpoint in order to reconcile the Upaniṣads which give prominence to renunciation or asceticism with the Gītā in matters other than the concept of Brahma. The philosophical Idealism is no doubt common to both, but on this head are linked two equal arms, Sāṅkhya and Karma Yoga of the trunk of the Vedic religion. Mr. Tilak, however, admits that in accordance with the Iśā Upaniṣad the Gītā expressly inculcates the harmony of knowledge and action.

317. Again, while speaking of the relation between the Gītā and the Bhāgavata religion, Mr. Tilak raises the question: Are the chief elements of the Vedic religion, viz., sacrificial rituals of the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣadic doctrine of Brahma, the Sāṅkhya of Kapila, the Yoga consisting in concentration of the mind, and

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Bhakti, taken by the Gītā directly from the various Upaniṣads or are there intermediate steps? Although some verses of the Kaṭha and other Upaniṣads relating to the doctrine of Brahma are found here and there in the Gītā and the Upaniṣadic example of Janaka and others has been given, Tilak does not accept the view that the Gītā is directly based on the Upaniṣad, as the Gītā does not mention the Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads in the traditional line of teachers of its religion and as there is no proof in favour of the hypothesis that Kṛṣṇa of the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, who learns the theory of sacrifices from Ghora Ángirasa, and Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā were one and the same person, nor is there any mention of Ghora Ángirasa in the Gītā. Besides, it is clear from the Bṛhadáráṇyaka Upaniṣad, so thinks Tilak, that at the time of Janaka there was no element of Bhakti in the mode of culture that aimed at reconciling the paths of knowledge and action. These points of difference between the Gītā and the Upaniṣad (especially with regard to the element of Bhakti), as noticed by Tilak, require a close examination.

318. (i) The Gītā not only owes its concept of Brahma but also its harmony of the religion of Bhakti with the way of sacrifices and other popular modes of worship and even its ideas of Sāṅkhya and Yoga entirely to the Upaniṣadic speculations. Whatever differences one may recognize between the philosophical and the religious outlooks of the Gītā and of the Upaniṣad are due rather to the fact that philosophical ideas and religious practices at the time of the Gītā had attained a higher development compared with those which prevailed at an earlier age when the older Upaniṣads were composed. There is, however, greater similarity between the Gītā on the one hand and the Íśa, the Kaṭha and the Śvetásvatara Upaniṣads on the other, simply because the latter belong to an age not far removed from that of the Gītā, as Mr. Tilak himself admits. Moreover, the author of the Gītā himself has given sufficient hint in his work with regard to his indebtedness to the Ṛṣis of the earlier Upaniṣads and also with regard to his belonging to the same circle of philosophical thought as the authors of the later metrical Upaniṣads. Besides quoting the example of Janaka and other sages, who are mentioned in the Upaniṣads as ideal men, and besides condemning the performers of the Vedic rites and yet idealizing the sacrificial religion by the injunction of the purer motive of self-purification and self-discipline in the spirit of the

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Upaniṣads, the Gītā expressly mentions the Upaniṣadic texts under the name of the Vedānta and Brahmasūtras, and even quotes a number of verses from the Kaṭha, Mundaka and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. Certain doctrines of the Gītā which Mr. Tilak ascribes to the Sāṅkhya system of Kapila are said to have been sung in manifold ways by the Vedic Ṛṣis and supported by reasons in the Brahmasūtras (XIII. 5). Whether we interpret the term Brahmasūtra as referring to a text-book of Vedānta philosophy or as meaning the Upaniṣads, the Vedāntic character of the poem is established. Mr. Tilak got rid of the inconsistency in his views by assuming this verse to be an interpolation made in the revised Gītā by the editor of the present Mahābhārata who is also regarded as the author of the Vedāntasūtras—an assumption which is as unnecessary and as untenable as the theory of Garbe, which we have discussed in the first Book. Following the same procedure, we might delete the opening verses of the fourth chapter in the Gītā as interpolations made by the Bhāgavata editors in order to falsify the records of the Upaniṣadic origin of the Gītā and to create an impression about its Bhāgavata origin by showing the similarity of the traditional line of succession among the teachers of the Gītāic religion and those of Bhāgavatism. Moreover, even this particular passage which, according to Tilak, proves the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, does refer to the royal sages (Rājaraṣis or Ṛṣis belonging to the Kṣatriya class) as the possessors or knowers of the original doctrine of Yoga as taught in the Gītā, and it is these royal sages who are also credited with the discovery of the Science of Brahman in the Upaniṣads. Thus the Upaniṣadic character of the Gītā is established by the very facts cited by Tilak in favour of his contrary hypothesis.

319. (ii) Mr. Tilak finds fault with the commentators of the Gītā for putting a far-fetched sectarian interpretation on its teachings when they read in the texts the thoughts of the Upaniṣads, and at the same time he accuses them of the opposite fault of non-sectarian reading of the text, because they are silent on the Bhāgavata significance of the opening verse in the fourth chapter of the Gītā,—the ground of this silence being, according to Tilak's presumption, the fear on their part lest a sectarian interpretation might mean a reflection on the other sects, which would have thereby received a stamp of inferiority. Nothing could betray the weakness and inconsistency of Tilak's position more clearly than

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this reversing of the natural order of things and laying the blame at the door of the commentators, where he himself is in the wrong. It is indeed a curious feat of reasoning to argue that those who interpret the Gītā doctrines in the light of the Upaniṣadic speculations are actuated by sectarian motives, while those who find evidences of a sectarian character due to the influence of Bhāgavatism even in those passages of the Gītā where the traditional schools of commentators are silent about it are the right interpreters. We know of few commentators of the Gītā (with such honourable exceptions as venerable Pandit Goura Gobinda Upādhyāya, who wrote a Bhāṣya reconciling all the existing commentators on modern lines) who have not been biased by one or other of the philosophical schools and religious sects in their interpretation of this text, and these sectarian scholastic commentators would have certainly noticed the significance of the verse G. IV. 1 with regard to the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, had they been aware of any such implications. Their silence on the subject rather confirms our suspicion that Mr. Tilak is biased by his pro-Bhāgavata sympathies and has gone far beyond the legitimate scope of his enquiries in ascribing a wrong motive for the silence of the commentators. If this learned scholar of our country traces the error of Garbe's interpretation of the Gītā to the fact that the German savant did not understand the true meanings of the words Śāṅkhya and Yoga in our text and ignored the historical succession of the various elements of the Vedic religion presupposed by the Gītā and also to the fact that he kept in view the history of Christianity alone while interpreting the religion of Bhakti in the Gītā, we may equally well maintain that Mr. Tilak himself has committed the same error of reading the whole history of the Vedic religion and the whole philosophy and religion of the Gītā in the light of Vaiṣṇavism and under the influence of that particular sect of it which is known as Bhāgavatism. Indeed, Mr. Tilak is not alone among eminent Indian scholars in this respect, for we have commentaries of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja on the Brahmasūtras and the Bhāgavad-Gītā which are coloured by their particular philosophical views and religious tendencies, and according to Mādhva's commentary we shall have to regard the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad as a sectarian scripture, upholding the worship of Vāyu, Hanumān, and such other gods.

320. (iii) According to Mr. Tilak, the Upaniṣads are mentioned



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in various places of the Mahābhārata and the philosophy of the Epic is based on the Upaniṣads, but the Gītā differs from the latter in this respect, that it does not divorce the element of devotion from its philosophy. Our learned scholar seems to have ignored that, in the Upaniṣads too, the devotional and the intellectual factors inseparably blend, and we have not only explicit injunctions in the Upaniṣads to worship the great Self as the beloved (Ātmānameva Priyam Upāsita, etc.), but the very meaning of the term "Upaniṣad" has been closely associated by many scholars with *Upāsana* or devout worship. Whether we agree with Deussen or with Oldenberg as to the original meaning of the word "Upaniṣad" there can be no denying the fact that in the earliest Upaniṣads that have come down to us (viz., the Bṛhadāranyaka and the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad) the religious-devotional aspect has received as much prominence as the pure speculative side, or we may claim at least that religion and philosophy are not sharply differentiated from each other.

321. (iv) It appears that Mr. Tilak has given a technical interpretation to the term "Bhakti" and applied one particular standard of devotion to all the stages of religious evolution in India without any discrimination, forgetting that Bhakti has many forms and many grades and that its degrees of manifestations vary from age to age. We cannot expect the composers of the Vedic hymns to exhibit the same type of religion and devotion as the sages of the Upaniṣads, nor can we judge the qualities of devotional life that prevailed in the Upaniṣadic age and in the Epic and the Purāṇic age by the same standard. Mr. Tilak cannot deny the presence of Bhakti in the R̥gveda. It is by an arbitrary reading of history and psychology and by a perversion of thought that some scholars have sought to prove that the movement of Bhakti in India is not indigenous, but is an importation from abroad, and it is by the same logic or want of it that others have tried to establish that Bhakti is a product of the Bhāgavata movement or was first developed in India during the Buddhistic age. No, the element of Bhakti is neither of foreign descent nor a later growth in the Indian soil. It had originated and developed quite naturally and spontaneously within the sacrificial atmosphere of the Vedic Ṛsis, and was gradually elevated and purified by the lofty thoughts and sublime morality of the Upaniṣadic sages, till it received its most beautiful idealistic expression in the Bhagavad-Gītā, after which it was again



nourished and further elaborated under the realistic mode of thought prevalent in the Epic and the Purānic age, when the theory of incarnation and sectarian devotion to a personal God lent much colour and force to this stream of Bhakti and led to the rich unfolding of this native germ in manifold forms among various sects of Hindus. Nay, from the standpoint of the law of religious evolution in humanity, one may go further and say that the divine seed of Bhakti has always been present in human society at every stage of its development in one form or other, however gross and mixed up with ignorance and superstitions, however dark and unenlightened by philosophical speculations, and however barren and unproductive of social service or outward practice it may have been at times during the earlier stages of its development. As in the case of all other mental and moral qualities, there has never been an abrupt beginning or sudden break in the evolution of this gift of heaven in the human heart, but a continuous flow from the cruder to the more refined, a steady rise from the lower to higher stages of perfection, in spite of temporary falls or lapses in the life of the individual and of the race. Of course, judged by the highest standard, the Bhakti of the Christian and the Vaiṣṇava type also may be found wanting, and Mr. Tilak cannot reasonably maintain that the term "Bhakti" is only applicable to the blind worship of weak mortal preceptors or to the personal devotion towards a human God, which is enjoined by the Vaiṣṇava cult, and that the spontaneous outpouring of the heart which we recognize in the Vedic hymns, and the intellectual-ethical fervour of devotion which saturates the verses of the metrical Upaniṣads cannot be or should not be known as "Bhakti."

## SECTION II. THE VEDĀNTA AND SĀṆKHYA YOGA ELEMENTS IN THE GĪTĀ

*(Tilak's arguments refuted)*

322. (v) On Tilak's own admission, the conception of the immortality of the soul, by virtue of which one should not grieve over the physical death of men, the concepts of imperishable (Akṣara) Brahma, of the field and the knower of the field (Kṣetra and Kṣetrajña, i.e., object and subject), and the knowable highest Absolute are all taken by the Gītā from the Upaniṣads, especially from the metrical Upaniṣads, and the concept of Māyā in the Gītā

and the Mahābhārata is based on the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad. In one word, what are known as the Vedāntic elements in the Gītā are admitted by Tilak to be of Upaniṣadic origin. But when one makes a closer study of the Gītā and the Upaniṣads without any sectarian bias, one is sure to discover that the other elements of the Gītāic teachings, to which Tilak ascribes a Bhāgavata origin, viz., the so-called Sāṅkhya-Yoga concepts, the moral and religious ideals, including those of Bhakti and disinterested action, are also derived from the Upaniṣadic soil and atmosphere. For example, the idea of Bhakti towards a personal but formless God is already apparent in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (cf. *Yasya deve parā Bhakti*), and the ideal of reconciling action with knowledge is clearly set forth in the beautiful verses of the *Isā Upaniṣad*.

323. (vi) Tilak finds, however, another difference between the Gītā and the Upaniṣad in the fact that while the nature of *Nirguṇa Brahma* (i.e., the Absolute, devoid of any attributes) is the same in both, the origin of *Saguṇa Brahma* (personal God) is ascribed by the former to *Māyā* or *Ajñāna* (illusion or ignorance), and by the latter (e.g., Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad) to *Avidyā*. Thus while the essence of the Upaniṣadic philosophy was extracted by the Gītā, the concept of *Avidyā* consisting of name and form was already turned into *Māyā* at the time of its composition. Here, Mr. Tilak has unnecessarily extended the application of a technical term beyond its proper range and limit. The distinction between *Saguṇa Brahma* and *Nirguṇa Brahma* was drawn by Indian philosophers at a much later stage of thought than that of the Gītā, which speaks only of distinction between *Akṣara* and *Kṣara* and between *Avyakta* and *Vyakta*, and never of that between *Saguṇa* and *Nirguṇa*, although the doctrine of *Guṇas* in the technical sense is highly developed in the Gītā. Moreover, the concept of *Māyā* has a long history in the ancient Indian literature and has been used by the Vedic poet-prophets in different senses, and even in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad the concept has been identified with that of *Prakṛti*. All we can say is that there has been development in the Upaniṣadic thought with regard to the concepts of *Brahmā*, *Māyā* and *Avidyā* from the earliest stage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Chhāndogya* to the later stages, as represented by the Śvetāśvatara and other Upaniṣads, and that the Gītā draws its inspiration from the later phase of the Upaniṣadic literature, as it belongs to the latter group. It is as unhistorical

as it is unphilosophical to ascribe to the Gītā as well as to the Śvetāśvatara and other Upaniṣads technical terms and distinctions which had their origin at a later age of systematic thought.

324. (vii) According to Mr. Tilak, the Sāṅkhya system of Kapila has been given a prominent place in the Gītā. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Chhāndogya Upaniṣads are no doubt intellectualistic but they are not Sāṅkhyaite. Although Kaṭha and other Upaniṣads employ such Sāṅkhya terms as Avyakta and Mahat, they should be interpreted in accordance with the Vedānta. In the Vedānta system the world-processes of names and forms are explained on the basis of the threefold causes of the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad. But the Gītā does not recognize this way of explaining the eternal and non-eternal in philosophy, leaving aside the Sāṅkhya system altogether, but accepts the theory of five-fold causes. Tilak however admits that the Gītā does not accept the Sāṅkhya system as it is, for while they agree entirely with regard to the evolution of manifest creation (*Vyakta Sṛṣṭi*) out of the unmanifest matter consisting of the three *guṇas* (Sāttva, rajas and tamas), according to the gradation of *guṇas* and with regard to the nature of the subject (Puruṣa) as seer and devoid of *guṇas*, they differ in so far as the Vedāntic monism becomes predominant over the Sāṅkhya dualism in the Gītā. For instance, according to the Gītā, *Prakṛti* and *Puruṣa* are not independent, but are parts or aspects of the same Highest Brahma, as conceived by the Upaniṣads, although the Gītā retains the Sāṅkhya distinction of Kṣara and Akṣara (eternal and non-eternal). This combination of the monistic conception of the unity of Brahma and Ātmā with the Sāṅkhya order of creation is a common feature of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata, and Mr. Tilak lays stress on this circumstance as an additional proof in support of his theory that they are works of the same author.

325. We have already seen how Garbe was entirely mistaken in regarding the philosophy of the Gītā as based on the Sāṅkhya-Yoga systems and in considering the Vedāntic portions of the Gītā to be later interpolations. What we have said against Garbe equally holds good against Tilak, although the latter concedes the predominance of the Vedāntic monism over the Sāṅkhya dualism in the Gītā. Both these scholars have laboured under a grave delusion, viz., that the author of the Gītā knew the Sāṅkhya system of philosophy and was influenced by it. Mr. Tilak himself

admits that the term Sāṅkhya has been used in the Gītā in different senses and bears a general meaning as well as a technical meaning, and that it is only in the verse G. XVIII. 13 that an express reference has been made to the Sāṅkhya system of Kapila. But even in this single instance, neither Tilak nor Garbe nor any other commentator has been able to tell us exactly where the so-called Sāṅkhya doctrine of five causes is to be found. So far as we are aware there is no text of Sāṅkhya philosophy that contains any such doctrine or refers to it. Again, Tilak tells us in another place that the Gītā is perfectly in agreement with the Upaniṣads or the Vedānta with regard to the creation and evolution of this world-order, as both do not recognize the sixteen principles of the Sāṅkhya system, which are *vikāras* or effects (i.e., the eleven Indriyas or senses and five *tanmātras* or objects of senses), and as both make Prakṛti, with eight other principles (five elements, mind, intellect and egoism), only the lower aspect of the Divine nature of Brahma. Moreover, wherever the Gītā maintains the doctrine of Kṣara and Akṣara, Vyakta and Avyakta, it is according to the Vedāntic principle as set forth in the Upaniṣads. There is thus no distinctly Sāṅkhyaite reference whatsoever in the Gītā, every term with a Sāṅkhya association being easily intelligible in the light of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta. The distinction between the concepts of Avidyā and Māyā is a product of later development of the Vedāntic thought and not to be found in the classical Vedānta of the Upaniṣads, and the Gītā, too, uses the term "Māyā" in both the older and the later senses as some of the Upaniṣads also do. Leaving out the Sāṅkhyaite version of the Vedānta which was merely a later development, he would discover that in spite of apparent resemblances between some of the Sāṅkhya terms or concepts and those employed in the Gītā, the philosophical thoughts of the Gītā are identical with and naturally evolved from those to be found in the older intellectualistic Upaniṣads. It is reversing the natural order of things to say that the poet of the Gītā found the Vedāntic monism and the Sāṅkhya dualism side by side and tried to effect a reconciliation by placing a third principle—called higher Avyakta or the highest Puruṣa—above the dualistic pairs of Vyakta and Avyakta or Kṣara and Akṣara; rather should we conceive that the Gītā holds before us a stage of thought prior to the systematic development of the Vedāntic and the Sāṅkhya schools of philosophy and attempts a poetic synthesis of all the different lines of thought



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followed by the Ṛsis of the Upaniṣads, as the speculative ideas of these latter were capable of Vedāntic interpretation, although they contained the germs of both the later systems. Mr. Tilak seeks to support his conclusion by reference to other sections of the Mahābhārata, especially the Nārāyaṇīya, but the Mahābhārata represents the thoughts of many ages and not of one period, and the evidences of the Nārāyaṇīya are not reliable, as it belongs to a later sectarian and scholastic period.

326. As a matter of fact, however, all the points of agreement and difference between the Gītā and the Sāṅkhya system noticed by Tilak go rather to confirm and strengthen our position that the Gītā is a product of the Upaniṣadic age and partakes of the Vedāntic character of the age both in its philosophy and in its religion. For where the Gītā seems to convey Sāṅkhya doctrines, these are but the common possession of the sages of that period, being the spiritual heritage from the Upaniṣads.<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that the concept of Guṇas in the Upaniṣads has not only led to the doctrine of Māyā along one line, but also accounts for the distinction between the Vyakta (or Saṅga Iśvara) and the Avyakta (or Nirguṇa Brahma) along another line; and it is by emphasizing one of the Guṇas (viz., the Sattva) as against the other two that the theory of incarnation and concepts of Bibhūti and Vyūhas of the later sectarian scholars may be conceived to have developed. Lastly, the doctrine of Puruṣa as the seer or the knowing subject and as free from the guṇas, which is supposed to have been borrowed by the Gītā from the Sāṅkhya system, has also its root in the idealistic philosophy of the Vedānta as taught by Yājñavalkya in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. Thus all the prominent Sāṅkhyaite features of the Gītā can be explained on the basis of the Upaniṣads. But if the doctrines found to be common between the Gītā and the Sāṅkhya point to their Upaniṣadic origin, it goes without saying that the points where they differ will justify us still more in assigning to the Gītā a Vedāntic position in the sense that it makes a culminating stage in the development of the Upaniṣadic thought. Tilak himself admits that, in the Gītā Vedāntic monism gets prominence over the Sāṅkhya

<sup>1</sup> For example, the evolution of the manifest world from the unmanifest and the order of creation and dissolution in the Gītā are the same as in the Sāṅkhya, because both of them owe their ideas to the Upaniṣads. Similarly the doctrines of three Guṇas are much the same in the Sāṅkhya, in the Vedānta and the Gītā, and the original source of them all is the Upaniṣadic literature.



dualism, but the fact is that the Gītā holds the balance even between two antithetical positions which have divided the schools of philosophers in the East and in the West from the earliest age. Theism and Pantheism, Dualism and Monism are two necessary aspects of the same truth or convex and concave sides of the same shield, and it must be said to the eternal glory of the poet of the Gītā that he has represented these correlated factors as parts of an organic unity or harmonious whole in a manner unrivalled in the world-literature.

327. Historically, no doubt, the Gītā is prior to both the systems of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta philosophies, as known to us, and takes its materials from the Upaniṣadic literature and the atmosphere of the Epic age in general, when there were no clear-cut divisions made between various lines of philosophical speculations and when the metaphysical concepts were not precisely defined and sharply differentiated from each other. But it is not difficult to conceive how the germs of truth or flashes of insight contained in the poetic synthesis of the Gītā were developed by different thinkers and received a systematic shape in the various schools of later ages. For example, the Gītā speaks both of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* as *Anādi* (i.e., without beginning), and this is supposed to be a Sāṅkhya doctrine, but the Vedāntic school known as "qualified monism," of which Rāmānuja is one of the most powerful exponents, also conceives of *Jīva* and *Jagat* (the individual soul and the world) as real, potentially contained in Brahma from the beginning and therefore co-eternal with Brahma. The source of this Vedāntic school is to be found in the Upaniṣads where the cosmical and the psychical principles, the self and the not-self, which were later known as *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, are often held as co-ordinate aspects of the same reality, and Rāmānuja had evidently an ancient tradition and long line of Vedāntic teachers behind him to support this view. Similarly the distinction between *Kṣara* and *Akṣara* is explicitly stated in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, and a third principle (viz., the Supreme spirit) is superadded thereto, and in view of this Upaniṣadic authority, it is unnecessary to assume the Sāṅkhya origin of this doctrine in the Gītā, as Tilak has done.

328. The inference of the common authorship of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata from the mere resemblance of their philosophical ideas, or from the so-called combination of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta

followed by the Ṛṣis of the Upaniṣads, as the speculative ideas of these latter were capable of Vedāntic interpretation, although they contained the germs of both the later systems. Mr. Tilak seeks to support his conclusion by reference to other sections of the Mahābhārata, especially the Nārāyaṇīya, but the Mahābhārata represents the thoughts of many ages and not of one period, and the evidences of the Nārāyaṇīya are not reliable, as it belongs to a later sectarian and scholastic period.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the evolution of the manifest world from the unmanifest and the order of creation and dissolution in the Gītā are the same as in the Sāṅkhya, because both of them owe their ideas to the Upaniṣads. Similarly the doctrines of three Guṇas are much the same in the Sāṅkhya, in the Vedānta and the Gītā, and the original source of them all is the Upaniṣadic literature.

dualism, but the fact is that the Gītā holds the balance even between two antithetical positions which have divided the schools of philosophers in the East and in the West from the earliest age. Theism and Pantheism, Dualism and Monism are two necessary aspects of the same truth or convex and concave sides of the same shield, and it must be said to the eternal glory of the poet of the Gītā that he has represented these correlated factors as parts of an organic unity or harmonious whole in a manner unrivalled in the world-literature.

327. Historically, no doubt, the Gītā is prior to both the systems of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta philosophies, as known to us, and takes its materials from the Upaniṣadic literature and the atmosphere of the Epic age in general, when there were no clear-cut divisions made between various lines of philosophical speculations and when the metaphysical concepts were not precisely defined and sharply differentiated from each other. But it is not difficult to conceive how the germs of truth or flashes of insight contained in the poetic synthesis of the Gītā were developed by different thinkers and received a systematic shape in the various schools of later ages. For example, the Gītā speaks both of *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* as *Anādi* (i.e., without beginning), and this is supposed to be a Sāṅkhya doctrine, but the Vedāntic school known as "qualified monism," of which Rāmānuja is one of the most powerful exponents, also conceives of *Jīva* and *Jagat* (the individual soul and the world) as real, potentially contained in Brahma from the beginning and therefore co-eternal with Brahma. The source of this Vedāntic school is to be found in the Upaniṣads where the cosmical and the psychical principles, the self and the not-self, which were later known as *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, are often held as co-ordinate aspects of the same reality, and Rāmānuja had evidently an ancient tradition and long line of Vedāntic teachers behind him to support this view. Similarly the distinction between *Kṣara* and *Akṣara* is explicitly stated in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, and a third principle (viz., the Supreme spirit) is superadded thereto, and in view of this Upaniṣadic authority, it is unnecessary to assume the Sāṅkhya origin of this doctrine in the Gītā, as Tilak has done.

328. The inference of the common authorship of the Gītā and the Mahābhārata from the mere resemblance of their philosophical ideas, or from the so-called combination of Sāṅkhya and Vedānta

doctrines, has just as much justification as the other arguments advanced by Tilak in support of his theory about the Gîtâ being an integral part of the Mahâbhârata, which we have discussed in the last Book. There is a great divergence of opinions among modern Scholars on the question whether the author of the Gîtâ emphasized the common elements of two distinct and opposed systems which were already there as ready-made and finished wholes and sought to bring about a reasoned reconciliation between them, or whether the philosophical thoughts of the Gîtâ are to be regarded rather as the natural development out of a systematic exposition and clear analysis of the Upaniṣadic ideas due to the spiritual intuition and unconscious philosophy of a gifted poetical genius. In other words, whether in the Gîtâ we have to do with a philosophical synthesis of prevalent speculative systems attempted by a thinker brought up in the scholastic methods or rather with a poetic synthesis and inspired vision of a seer who had a prophetic anticipatory glimpse of the inner harmony and unity of structure in the scattered conceptual elements of the Upaniṣads and tried to give them a highly poetical and religious expression long before the reconciliation (or Samanvaya) effected by the Brahmasūtras in a systematic manner.

329. Most of the modern scholars, including Dwijendra Nāth Tagore, Sītā Nāth Tattvabhūṣana, Garbe and the Indian commentators in general, have chosen the first alternative and discovered in the Gîtâ a reflective harmony of the two conflicting systems of the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta. We have ventured to suggest that the second hypothesis of the pre-systematic origin of the philosophy of the Gîtâ as a poetic synthesis of the Upaniṣadic ideas is the sounder one, as it is more in consonance with historical facts and principles of the evolution of thought. It is undoubtedly true that different philosophical schools like the Vedānta and Sāṅkhya did arise out of the various germs of ideas found in the Upaniṣads along divergent lines of thought, and that while along one line of reasoning a master thinker could bring about a reconciliation of the Upaniṣadic passages on the basis of the principle of non-dualism or identity and thus give rise to the Vedānta system, an opposite line of speculation could lead another philosophical genius to establish dualistic conclusions on the same data and thereby prepare the way for the Sāṅkhya system. But the poet of the Gîtâ could not have been familiar with this reasoned dis-



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cussion and acute analysis, nor with the fixed technical concepts of either of these two systems, while his acquaintance with the Upaniṣadic literature of the earliest period is more than apparent. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the Gītā arose in the same line of development of the Upaniṣadic thoughts as the Katha and the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. Of course no proper solution of this problem is possible without an accurate idea of the age and the environments of the poet of the Gītā and this will be attempted in the next volume on the basis of such materials as are supplied by the Gītā itself in regard to the philosophical background and religious antecedents and foundations of its teachings. The part can only be judged by the whole, and the tree can be known by the seed from which it is developed and by the soil and atmosphere in the midst of which it has been nourished. If one conducts an impartial and dispassionate enquiry without being prejudiced by orthodox and traditional views and taking as his guide the fundamental principles of historical criticism, one is sure to find ample corroboration of our thesis that the philosophy and religion of the Bhagavad-Gītā have their roots deeply laid in the soil of the Vedic Samhitā and that their branches freely breathe in the atmosphere of the Upaniṣads, although the tender plant of this beautiful poem has received some nourishment at a later stage of its growth from the dew-drops and sunshine of the Epic and the Purānic environments. If anyone contends that among the heritage of the Gītā must be counted some non-Vedic and non-Brāhmaṇic elements of philosophical and religious culture, we shall at once concede the point with the remark that a certain amount of anti-Vedic and anti-Brāhmaṇic influence is noticeable even in the Upaniṣads themselves, which are the original fountain-heads of the Gītāic inspiration and from which the author of the Gītā must have inherited his protestant voice and dissenting spirit with regard to the popular elements of the Vedic religion and society.

### SECTION III. THE GĪTĀIC DOCTRINE OF DEVOTION TO GOD IN HUMAN FORM AS DISTINCT FROM UPANIṢADIC BHAKTI

*(Tilak's views further examined)*

330. (viii) Another great difference between the Gītā and the Upaniṣads consists, according to Tilak, in the fact that Bhakti or devotion towards God in the human form is present in the



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former, but absent in the latter. Although the Upaniṣads like the Gîtā consider sacrifices and rituals as inferior to knowledge, they do not, says Tilak, enjoin the worship of the manifest God in the human form as is done by the Gîtā. Again, the Upaniṣads like the Gîtā tell us that it is difficult to comprehend the unmanifest Brahma, devoid of all attributes, but they do not mention the manifestation of God in a human form, though they recognize the need of worshipping God, through visible symbols like the mind, the firmament, the sun, the fire, the sacrifices, etc. In the Maitrāyaṇi and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads, no doubt, such gods as Rudra, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Maheśwara, Achyūta and Nārāyaṇa are said to be forms of the Supreme spirit (*paramātmā*) and in the latter Upaniṣad even the word *Bhakti* is expressly used (*Yasya Deva parā Bhakti*); but according to Tilak, it cannot be said with certainty whether expressions like Nārāyaṇa, etc., refer to the incarnation of God in human forms, for Rudra and Viṣṇu are Vedic gods (e.g., Yajña is identified with Viṣṇu). Tilak, however, admits that *Bhakti* in the Śvetāśvatara signifies that probably the conception of Avatāra (incarnation) in human forms was already formulated in those times, for *Bhakti* could not be employed with regard to the mode of worship consisting in sacrifices. He cannot decide on the basis of such later sectarian Upaniṣads as the Rāmātāpaṇiya and Gopālatāpaṇiya, Nṛsimha-tāpaṇiya or Mahānārāyaṇiya, whether devotion towards Viṣṇu in the human form originated in the Vedic religion, but admits that antiquity of *Bhakti* as a mode of religious culture in India is proved by reference to the Pāṇini Sūtras IV. 3, 95 (*Vāsudevārjunābhyām* Bun) and to the Buddhistic literature which mentions *Bhakti*. According to Tilak the Mahāyana school of Buddhism owes the elements of *Bhakti* introduced therein to the influence of the Bhāgavata religion founded by Kṛṣṇa. In any case the path of *Bhakti* was well-founded in India before Buddhism, about 600 B.C. Of course, Nārada Pañcharātra, Śāṇḍilya Sūtra, and Nārada *Bhakti-sūtra* are of later origin, but that does not raise any difficulty as to the antiquity of the path of *Bhakti* and of the religion of Bhāgavatism.<sup>1</sup> Tilak thus

<sup>1</sup> We have already seen that the terms employed by the Gîtā as synonyms of God connote no sectarian meaning, but are general designations or epithets of God familiar to the literature of that age, e.g., Vāsudeva, Iśwara, Parameśwara, Param-Ātmā, Brahma, Puruṣottama, etc., and that Kṛṣṇa in the Gîtā speaks of himself as one with God and uses such pronouns in the first person as *me*, *my*, *myself*, etc., where we should understand God and nothing but God, after the fashion of Upaniṣadic Ṛsis who used to identify themselves with the supreme Spirit and communicate

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concludes that from the symbolical worship of God with the help of visible forms, as described in the old Upaniṣads, the path of Bhakti was gradually developed. This path was further nourished by the Yoga system of Patañjali, requiring the mind to be fixed on a visible object. One of the essential elements of the Gītā doctrine is, according to Tilak, to develop that way of Bhakti, especially Bhakti towards Vāsudeva from the point of view of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta.

331. Mr. Tilak has here committed exactly the same error as Garbe and the views of the former can be refuted on the same ground as those of the latter. Both these scholars have identified the Gītā with the Bhāgavata school and associated the loftier purer form of Bhakti taught by our poem with the later sectarian form of Bhakti upheld and practised by the popular form of Kṛṣṇa-cult. The root-error of both these scholars lies in their regarding the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā as the Vaiṣṇava incarnation of God in the human form whose life and works have been celebrated in the later scriptures of the Bhāgavatas. In reality however, the Gītā is not a sectarian text-book and does not teach Bhakti towards Vāsudeva or any other incarnation of God. We cannot make out how Tilak could speak of a difference between the Gītā and the Upaniṣads as regards the element of Bhakti or worship of God. The stream of Bhakti which took its rise in India from the height of the Vedic hymns flows continuously and uninterruptedly through the stony rocks of the intellectualistic Upaniṣads and reaches its sublimest purity of devotion and profoundest depth of speculations in the fertile soils of the "Happy Valley" of the Gītā, standing as it does at the foot of the lofty ranges of Himalayan speculations of the Upaniṣads with their peaks radiant with milk-white snows of the Vedic songs melting at the touch of the sunshine of Divine grace and inspiration. It is only lower down the plains of the Epic and the Purānic literature that the current of Bhakti received the accumulated dirt and impurity of idolatrous worship and the vulgar excesses of sensualism and sentimentalism with all the associated evils of the human passions and desires.

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their own doctrines as Divine utterances. All such designations of Kṛṣṇa as Keśi-niśūdana, Madhusūdana, Janārdana, which are employed in the Gītā, when Arjuna addresses Kṛṣṇa, have no vital connection with the teachings of the poem and are probably due to the Epic editors who incorporated the Gītā into the Mahābhārata at a period when Kṛṣṇa had already been accepted as an incarnation of God. Hence there is not sufficient ground for assuming a sectarian origin of the Gītā or any Bhāgavata colouring or Viṣṇuite association in its teachings.

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Mr. Tilak has done a great injustice to the ancient seers and sages who moulded the religious history and spiritual life of early India by ignoring the unclouded, unturbid and untarnished channel of purer and more divine mode of Bhakti flowing beneath the surface of the oldest Upaniṣads, and by seeking the source of the sublime religion of the Gîtâ in the sectarian, emotional and therefore narrower form of Bhakti which permeates the later sectarian literature of the Hindus. He is not sufficiently alive to the fact that the Gîtâ has only developed the devotional spirit of the Ṛsis of the Upaniṣads who have tried in their own way to reconcile the popular sacrificial religion of the Vedic society with the higher current of the Upaniṣadic thought by idealizing the various materials and processes of the sacrificial ceremony and by extending their spiritual outlook so as to cover all the elements of nature and objects of senses within the range of human experience under the infinite and eternal life of God or the universal and absolute Spirit. The Gîtâ has simply sought to enlarge and deepen this sentiment of Bhakti and the idea of God-consciousness, teaching us how to see the ever-lasting presence and never-ceasing activity of God in all the various departments of nature which the composers of the Vedic hymns supposed to be presided over by different individual deities, and how to unite ourselves in love and devotion to this supreme Lord in a spirit of absolute resignation or entire self-abnegation. If this type of Bhakti is erroneously considered by some scholars like Tilak to be a special monopoly of the Bhāgavatas and to have been absent throughout the Vedic and Upaniṣadic age, the root of the error must be found in their arbitrary notion of Bhakti and biased study of its growth and development in the religious history of India. Those who are brought up in idolatrous surroundings and trained in the sectarian atmosphere of blind devotion towards a particular human God or incarnation, are apt to consider that Bhakti is unmeaning or unreal, if it is not associated with idolatrous worship or with the sectarian concept of incarnation, forgetting that our spiritual ancestors of the Vedic and Upaniṣadic periods, of whom we are justly proud, have left behind them sacred monuments of non-idolatrous and non-sectarian Bhakti and living germs of a purely monotheistic spiritual religion in the invaluable treasure of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, of which the Gîtâ is perhaps at once the finest product, the surest testimony and the most sublime and beautiful exposition. Before searching the Bhāgavata

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literature and the sectarian Upaniṣads of a later age for an explanation of the religion of Bhakti taught in the Gītā, Tilak and other scholars of his way of thinking would have done well in searching for its root in the earlier stratum of Indian thought. For example the Puruṣa-sūkta of the Ṛgveda and some of the oldest Upaniṣads cannot fail to impress an earnest enquirer as much by the profound sincerity of their conviction as by the impassioned eloquence of their language in regard to the loving devotion of man to the all-pervading all-good Spirit, and the author of the Gītā has not only inherited this conception of the universal presence and energy of God from the Vedic and Upaniṣadic seers, but also developed a definite mode of Pratīk-worship in his description of *Bibhātis* or manifestations in the 10th and the 11th chapters, where all that is beautiful and bright, splendid and mighty is said to have derived its essence and existence from the glory and the power of God.

332. Mr. Tilak himself admits that in the Śvetāśvatara and Maitreyī Upaniṣads, various gods are mentioned as forms of the Supreme Spirit, but it is not certain whether they refer to incarnations in human forms. But our account of the genesis of the theory of Incarnation makes it quite clear that the idea of God appearing in various forms is as old as the Vedic period and that not only human beings, but all animals and even inanimate beings were conceived to be manifestations of the divine essence in the Upaniṣads as well as in the Gītā, while the idea of God's descent on earth in a human form to accomplish a special object is a realistic development of thought which makes its first appearance in the later Epic and Purāṇic literature. Our conclusion with regard to this part of Tilak's argument is that the Śvetāśvatara and Maitreyī Upaniṣads do not certainly refer to human incarnations of God under the names of Rudra, Śiva, Viṣṇu, etc., and that the Gītā, too, belongs to the same stage of development and follows the same mode of thought in its concept of God and practice of devotion. Now if the idea of Bhakti towards Deva could be employed without the concept of incarnation in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, why should the same mode of thought be denied in the case of the Gītā? Mr. Tilak is so prepossessed by the idea of sectarian Bhakti and pre-occupied with his thoughts on the cult of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa that he has entirely forgotten his Vedic scholarship and Upaniṣadic learning in his treatment of the Gītā. Otherwise he



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would have seen that identification of man with God has its basis in the Ṛgveda and in the Upaniṣads, where the Ṛṣis not only speak of their divine origin and of their identification with Manu, Sūrya, Indra, etc., but also make such bold assertions as "Thou art that," "I am He," "I am Brahma" and so on, with a spiritual insight otherwise unknown in the world-literature. Thus just as in the dialogue between Yama and Nachiketa in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad and in the dialogue between Indra and Patardana in the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad, so in this discourse between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna in the Gītā the identification of the teacher with the Supreme Spirit has its root in the Vedic soil and the authors of all these texts breathe freely in the atmosphere of Vedāntic speculations.

333. That the Gītā does not belong to any particular religious sect nor aim at deifying Kṛṣṇa is evident also from the fact that, while mentioning a distinction between the worship of the unmanifest Brahma and that of Personal or manifest God, without any reference to the Vaiṣṇava God or the Bhāgavata mode of worship at all, and while describing the revelation of the universal form of God, it does not in any way refer to the person of Kṛṣṇa as an individual, nor to any man in particular, but to the cosmic form of God or to the universal man, not to Kṛṣṇa, the historical God of the Bhāgavatas as described in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa or Harivaṃśa, but to the infinite and universal Being, who is the eternal God of humanity and yet dwells in the heart of all sages and saints and inspires their sacred utterances.

334. References to the Mahānārāyaṇīya, Nṛsimhatāpaṇīya, Rāmatāpaṇīya and Gopāla-tāpaṇīya Upaniṣads are useless, because they are later sectarian works, whereas the Gītā is free from sectarian associations. It is only a lack of historical spirit that is betrayed in the attempts of some scholars to read into the earlier works thoughts and sentiments that were really developed at a later age and to project into the past what was historically generated at a subsequent age. All endeavours to interpret the teachings of the Gītā in the light of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata or of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, and of the Bhakti-sūtras of Nārada and Śāṇḍilya are vitiated by this error. Those who regard the Gītā as a Vaiṣṇavite or Kṛṣṇaite work are thus guilty of proceeding on unhistorical assumptions.

335. Again, Mr. Tilak is mistaken in thinking that devotion



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towards Viṣṇu or Rudra in human forms preceded the origin of Bhakti towards an impersonal Brahma or theistic spiritual God. In fact, *Bhakti directed towards God in his formless impersonal aspect* is an earlier growth in India than the realistic-humanistic Bhakti of the Purānic and sectarian age. It is not impossible nor improbable that the influence of Bhuddhism and Christianity on the Hindu religious-movements is responsible for the later development of the theory of incarnation and the sectarian Bhakti in the Vaiṣṇava literature. But there is another conceivable way in which the Vedāntic identification of man with God may have received a realistic turn and been modified into a humanistic view of the divine incarnation, and the purer Bhakti of the Upaniṣads and the Gītā may have degenerated into the lower modes of worshipping finite persons and objects as gods, viz., it may be due to the contact of the higher religious and philosophical currents of India with the non-Aryan and non-Vedic culture of a lower order and with the illiterate or uncultured masses of population in the Vedic society itself. One cannot fail to be struck by the gradual development of the Bhakti element from the R̥gvedic hymns to the thoughts of the Upaniṣads and the Gītā and by the wide gulf that separates the type of Bhakti manifested in the latter from the Epic and the Purānic exaggerations of Bhakti directed towards a human God. In the earlier stages, as covered by the periods of the Vedas, the older Upaniṣads and the Gītā, we have a progressive evolution from the conception of God as manifested in the various aspects of the visible universe, especially in the mighty forces of nature, to that of an impersonal God, Brahma, on the one hand and to a personal but still formless God, at once non-human, non-finite, and eternal on the other. In the later stages as reflected in the mythical Purānas we have a realistic, humanistic picture of God, actually born and brought up on earth like other mortals, appearing in a finite and visible form, exhibiting all the weaknesses and limitations of human beings, and playing a part on the temporal stage of life not unmixed with the worst evils and sufferings that befall the lot of man on earth, albeit possessing a potential infinitude for working miracles when the occasion requires it. If one reads the history of Indian religious thought correctly, one is sure to discover a progressive evolution in one period and steady decline and degeneration in another. One will then realize that there have been waves of elevation and depression in the entire religious and speculative life of the

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Hindus in as marked a degree as in the social and political, and recognize that the stream of Bhakti in India has not run evenly and smoothly from the earliest to the latest age, but rather followed a meandering and zigzag course, so that it was sometimes caught in the whirlpool of cross-currents at the meeting point of divergent movements and tendencies of thought and practices. Indeed many competent scholars like Mahámohopádhyáya Hara Prasád Śástri have discerned in the Bráhmaṇa portions of the Vedic literature influences already at work which could not but have emanated from non-Vedic Aryans. In the Upaniṣads we meet undoubtedly with a stage of Indian culture when the non-Bráhmaṇic element is sufficiently strong to assert itself, and the influence of the Kṣatriya class is abundantly in evidence throughout the early period of philosophical speculations. As regards the later sectarian cults of Kṛṣṇa and Śiva, there are reasons to believe that certain Kṣatriya families of rural areas or pastoral tribes as well as certain non-Aryan aboriginal races living in the hills on the borders of the Himálayas or some such regions had much to do not only with their origin and growth, but also with the infusion of new spirit, introduction of strange customs and rituals and the moulding of many ideas of fundamental importance in these popular movements. The concept of God and the idea of Bhakti, as presented in the Gîtá, are, however, much purer and loftier, because they had their origin in the earlier Upaniṣadic age and are therefore free from the taints of these later sectarian movements.

336. We are perfectly in agreement with Tilak when he says that the cult of Bhakti in India is not of foreign origin, but was gradually developed from the worship of God through symbolical forms or visible manifestations as described in the oldest Upaniṣads, and there may be some element of truth in his statement that this mode of spiritual culture through Bhakti was nourished by the Pátañjala system of Yoga which involved the concentration of mind on a fixed visible object, although we must accept this statement with due reservation in the case of the Gîtá, which in our opinion is prior to the philosophic system embodied in the Yoga-sūtras and ascribed to Patañjali. But we dissent entirely from the views of this great scholar when he tells us that one of the essential elements of the Gîtá doctrine was to develop that cult of Bhakti in its sectarian aspects, i.e., in the form of devotion towards Kṛṣṇa-Vásudeva, on the basis of the Upaniṣadic Vedánta.

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We have already gone through a detailed analysis of the teachings of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata which is recognized as the earliest source of the Vāsudeva cult and found that in all the essential elements and characteristic features, this sectarian religion differs from that of the Gītā. It is to be noted that even in its present form the Gītā does not plead the cause of any particular sect at all but preaches a universal religion of toleration and liberalism and catholic spirit, based on the Upaniṣadic thoughts. The Gītā still retains in spirit and form the religion and philosophy of the Upaniṣads in their sublimest and purest form in spite of its having passed through a transformation of language in the hands of the Epic redactors. The lofty ideal of Bhakti in the Gītā is far from being sectarian in its colouring or expression and is not at all directed towards Kṛṣṇa, as is believed by Tilak and others. The religion of devotion is inculcated throughout in this Divine Song in words and thoughts that could not be interpreted in a sectarian sense. Bhakti in the Gītā is used unmistakably in the same sense of devotion towards the Highest Self or Brahma, who is present everywhere and lives in the heart of all creatures, and whose manifestation is to be seen in all men and all gods and not in the person of Kṛṣṇa alone. In fact, the conception of God as represented in the Gītā is not at all compatible with his embodiment in a particular finite form to the exclusion of all others, nor with his incarnation in an historical human being called Kṛṣṇa or Vāsudeva, as is conjectured by the sectarian believers. This narrow Kṛṣṇaite interpretation of the Gītā would take away the very life and soul of the religion of the Gītā.

337. It is, however, not rarely that an Indian text-book of the oldest period, which was conceived and composed in a purely non-sectarian and universalistic spirit, is taken by later commentators to be a sectarian product and interpreted accordingly. We have already quoted as an example of this Mādhva's commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (*vide* S.B.H. translation). Similarly, the Vedānta Sūtras are interpreted by Rāmānūja in a way as if the author of the Sūtras were a staunch Vaiṣṇava, and what is more, Purāṇic names of gods and goddesses like Śrī or Lakṣmī and Viṣṇu which have long been associated with sectarian modes of worship are freely employed as substitutes for Brahma and Prakṛti. The explanation of such mode of interpretation is to be found in the fact that when a particular sect of religion

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or school of philosophy becomes popular and tends to gain ascendancy, there is natural inclination on the part of its adherents to connect it with older ways of thought and more authoritative texts of a remoter period, and thereby to establish their own favourite system on ancient traditions and scriptures. This leads to the twisting and turning of these ancient texts, and far-fetched sectarian and scholastic interpretations being put on their words in the light of later and more developed thought. This has happened in the case of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Mādhva and other eminent scholars with regard to their treatment of the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Brahmasūtras. It is therefore not surprising that Mr. Tilak has betrayed the same tendency and fallen into the same trap. However, Mr. Tilak comes nearest to the truth when he says that the Gītā develops Bhakti from the point of view of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta. And this is a sufficient concession lent to our view by a scholar whose thesis was to establish the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā—a position just the antithetical of ours.

#### SECTION IV. RECONCILIATION OF KARMAYOGA AND BHĀKTI AS A DIFFERENTIATING FEATURE OF THE GĪTĀ

*(Concluding Observations on Tilak's position)*

338. (ix) Again, Tilak argues that the Gītā reconciles Karma-Yoga with Bhakti and knowledge of Brahma, while in most of the Upaniṣads a minor place is given to the duties of the four castes and other religious practices of the worldly life. The general tendency of the Upaniṣadic teachings is towards renunciation of actions (Karma-Sannyāsa), the Iśā Upaniṣad being an exception. Nowhere in the Upaniṣads is such a support given to the ancient Karma-Yoga, removing the opposition between the spiritual and intellectual life on the one hand and the worldly duties on the other, as in the Gītā. Here, too, Mr. Tilak has minimized the value of the teachings of the Upaniṣads. It is not only in the Iśā Upaniṣad, but also in other Upaniṣads that the necessity of moral discipline and spiritual culture based on a harmony between action and knowledge is preached. The example of Janaka, which is upheld by the Gītā, has its source in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad. There is a markedly ethical tone running through all the older Upaniṣads, and some of them idealize the Vedic sacrifices and other duties of householders. Instead of rejecting the popular



modes of worship and the prevalent customs and traditions of society the Upaniṣads condemn the useless and inefficacious elements in them and make a special appeal in favour of the highest culture of the intellectualistic circles. The Upaniṣads, like the GĪtā, are conservative on the whole in their attitude towards the social order, although ideas of reforms of a protestant type are noticeable in both. Some sort of organization corresponding to the caste division and the system of āśramas (stages of life) did exist in the Upaniṣadic age, although not in as elaborate and complex forms as is represented by Manu, and there is no reason for supposing that the sages of the Upaniṣads were all recluses or monks, and therefore favoured renunciation. Of course, the tradition of retiring to the forests after a certain stage of life has been reached is a very ancient one, and even a great philosopher like Yājñavalkya followed that institution, as is apparent from the dialogue between him and Maitreyī. But it cannot be denied that, although the Upaniṣads condemned external forms and ceremonies and upheld a high moral ideal enjoining purity of heart, honesty of motives, truthfulness in words and deeds as well as obedience to parents, and other virtues necessary to the right discharge of worldly duties, there has been a real and important development in this respect in the teachings of the GĪtā. One must admit that the originality, the uniqueness, the sublime beauty and the supreme glory of the Divine Song lie in its moral ideal of disinterested action and its spiritual practice of Yoga, which required a harmonious synthesis of all the duties and virtues that lead men to perfection. In fact, the Karma-yoga of the GĪtā, involving as it does a comprehensive life of all-sided interests and harmonious development of all the aspects of human nature, may have its germs in a few idealistic passages of the Upaniṣads and even in some ślokas of the Vedas, but its real origin must be ascribed to the creative genius of the poet of this Song Divine.

339. That the author of the GĪtā is not indebted to any non-Vedic religion or later sectarian movement for his doctrine of Karmayoga, will be evident from the way in which he treats of the Vedic religious practices of studying the Vedas, performing sacrifices, austerities and giving alms. A reformer of liberal disposition as he was, the poet never cut himself loose from the conservative attitude of conforming to the customs and traditions of the Vedic society, but cautiously advanced his fellowmen towards



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a higher life through the ideal of disinterested action and purity of motives. If this Karmayoga of the Gîtā is an ancient ideal, as it is said to have been practised by Janaka and others before, its Vedic and Upaniṣadic basis is secured and the Gîtā must have developed it from this common heritage of India. It is quite unnecessary in that case to assume the Bhāgavata origin of this teaching in the Gîtā, as Mr. Tilak does. Besides there is no evidence for the assumption that the religion of Bhakti as represented by the Bhāgavata movement gave prominence to Karmayoga prior to the composition of the Gîtā and influenced the doctrines of our text in this respect.

(x) Lastly, Mr. Tilak suspects the influence of the Pātañjala Yoga on the ideal of Bhakti in the Gîtā. Leaving aside for the present the question of relation of the Gîtā to the Yoga system of philosophy and also the question as to how far it was chronologically possible for the author of the Yogasūtras to have lent any concept to the author of the Gîtā, which will be discussed when considering the age of the Gîtā, we may note at the outset that the concept and the practice of Yoga are of Upaniṣadic origin and have been known in India from a very ancient time long before the composition of the Gîtā and the Yogasūtras. The term "Yoga" has been expressly mentioned in the Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads, and the various elements of Yoga-culture are individually referred to in the Brhadāraṇyaka, Chhândogya and other Upaniṣads. Mr. Tilak is wrong in supposing that it is only Patañjali's Yoga that is devoted to the concentration of mind and suggests the means of attaining control over the mind by directing it to a visible object, for such processes are already referred to in the Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads. As the Gîtā has greater affinity with Kaṭha and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads than with the Pātañjala Sūtras, we are justified in ascribing the origin of the Yoga elements in the Gîtā to these Upaniṣads and in maintaining that our poet had developed these ideas systematically out of this ancient heritage. As in the case of the Vedānta and the Sāṅkhya so in the case of the Yoga, the Gîtā offers us a poetic synthesis of elements scattered in the various Upaniṣads before they were systematically philosophized in the Sūtras. Of course, there are many Upaniṣads specially devoted to the Yoga practices, with which the Gîtā has no connection, as they are of later origin and uphold the one-sided ideal of Yoga devoted to extraneous

## UPANIṢADS AND GĪTĀ—RELATION TO BHAKTI

ends, which leads to all sorts of excesses in mental disciplines. Moreover the term "Yoga" is used in the Gītā in various senses and not associated with Karma-Yoga alone, for we have in the Gītā such terms as Sāṅkhya-Yoga, Jñāna-Yoga, etc., signifying that the term "Yoga" was employed in a general sense to denote all modes of spiritual culture.<sup>1</sup> This also proves the earlier origin of the Gītā than that of the Yogasūtras of Patañjali. Curiously enough, Mr. Tilak while doubting whether Patañjali's Yogasūtras existed previously to the Gītā holds that the doctrine of Karma-Yoga taught in the latter was taken from the Bhāgavata religion, in which it was handed down through a successive line of teachers like Manu, Ikṣvāku and others and not derived from the Yoga of Patañjali. While we accept the views of Tilak as to the independent origin of the Gītāic doctrine of Yoga in relation to Patañjali we are not convinced by the arguments put forward by this learned scholar in favour of the origin of Karma-Yoga in the Bhāgavata religion. Tilak refers to the Nārāyaṇīya section, which as we have seen, has hardly any reference to this doctrine and which moreover is of a much later age than the Gītā. The generation of teachers mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya is more or less mythical and cannot supply the basis for any decision on historical questions. It is moving in a vicious circle to prove the Bhāgavata origin of the teachings of the Gītā by reference to the Nārāyaṇīya sections, and to prove that the Nārāyaṇīya preaches the same religion as the Gītā by the references to the Gītā made in the former. Is it not a more natural, reasonable and satisfactory procedure to explain the Karma-Yoga in the Gītā in the light of the Isā and other Upaniṣads?

341. We thus differ from Mr. Tilak on each and every point of his argument with regard to the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, and conclude that the distinction drawn by him between the Upaniṣadic teachings and the doctrines of the Gītā is either untenable or unconvincing on the following grounds :—

(i) The doctrine of Brahma in the Gītā is founded on the Upaniṣads and is conceived exactly on the same model, without any association with the concept of Vāsudeva or any other historical god, or an admixture of foreign elements derived from Bhāgavatism or other sectarian religions.

(ii) The theory of incarnation and the idea of Bhakti in the

<sup>1</sup> Vide also G. X. 7a, XI. 8d, where 'Yoga' means divine power.

Gītā also have their roots in the Vedic hymns and Upaniṣadic speculations and are widely different from the sectarian and realistic development of the same in the Bhāgavata School, as represented in the Nārāyaṇīya section, Harivaṃśa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa and other Vaiṣṇava works. Besides, Kṛṣṇa in the Gītā is not a god or incarnation of the Bhāgavatas but a teacher who identifies himself with God and speaks in the name of God after the fashion of the sages of the Upaniṣads, and carries no historical character or Purāṇic association about him except what is inevitably the consequence of the poetic setting of the episode as inserted in the Epic. Similarly Bhakti in the Gītā implies pure idealistic devotion directed towards one God conceived as a spiritual Being, and not the sectarian Bhakti to Vāsudeva as preached by the Bhāgavata scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

(iii) The concepts of creation and evolution, as well as of distinction between Vyakta and Avyakta, Kṣara and Akṣara, Kṣetra and Kṣetrajña in the Gītā are all derived from the Upaniṣads and have in this sense a Vedāntic basis, and need not be traced to a Sāṅkhya origin, both the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta systems of philosophy being of later origin than the poetic synthesis of the Upaniṣadic thoughts in the Gītā. There is therefore no foundation for the Epic origin of the Gītā, as held by Tilak on this ground.

(iv) The ideal of Karma-Yoga in the Gītā also may have its germ or beginning in the oldest Upaniṣadic literature, but has been so purified, elevated and reformed by the poet of the Gītā that his spiritual genius may be said to have specially made this unique contribution to the world-literature in philosophical and religious idealism. The concept was certainly not borrowed by him from the Bhāgavata text of the Nārāyaṇīya, nor from the Yoga system of Patañjali, both of which are later than the Gītā.

(v) Mr. Tilak has laid himself open to the charge of improperly twisting the meanings of certain terms and verses in the Gītā and giving them a far-fetched interpretation from the sectarian standpoint, and yet he has wrongly accused the traditional commentators of putting a sectarian meaning in one instance and a non-sectarian interpretation in another. As a matter of fact, the Bhagavad-Gītā is neither a product of the Bhāgavata movement nor of the Sāṅkhya or the Vedānta school of philosophy. But the philosophical and religious foundations of the poem are to be sought

<sup>1</sup> Vide other Chapters.

in the Vedic and the Upaniṣadic literature. While it is true that some of the older Upaniṣads seem to give prominence to Sannyāsa (renunciation or asceticism) in many places, it must be admitted that the elements of duty and devotion, too, are to be found there, although in a subdued and potential form. Of course these ideas are not as highly developed nor as explicitly formulated in the Upaniṣads as in the Gītā. The author of the latter has laid equal emphasis on all the factors of spiritual life and held the balance even between the claims of Jñāna, Bhakti, and Karma. Herein lies the originality or uniqueness of this Divine Song. But this does not signify any radical difference with regard to the stage of development in the spiritual and intellectual life of India between the times when the Upaniṣads were produced and the period when the Gītā was composed. Mr. Tilak's error can be accounted for by his undue bias in favour of the Bhāgavata religion and to his under-rating the value of the Upaniṣadic thoughts, and also to his inadequate recognition of the changes and differences that must have been wrought in the moral and speculative atmosphere of India during the period that passed between the composition of the oldest Upaniṣads and that of the Gītā. Besides, while the Gītā is the unitary product of a single individual, most of the older Upaniṣads embody a whole library of family collections and compositions representing different strata or layers of religious life and philosophical thinking. Hence the difference between the Upaniṣadic and Gītāic ideals and modes of culture.

(vi) Mr. Tilak is right in thinking that the idealistic philosophy (Adhyātmajñāna) is common to the Gītā and the Upaniṣads and forms the head, of which the Vedic religion is the trunk, but he is wrong in supposing that the addition of Sāṅkhya and Karma-Yoga as two equal arms differentiates the Gītā from the Upaniṣads, for the latter contain the germs of the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga elements which were later on brought into a poetic synthesis in the Gītā. As a matter of fact, it is now held by many competent scholars that the Epic Sāṅkhya was based on the Vedic philosophy and religion and it was out of this root that the classical Sāṅkhya was developed later on and connected with the Yoga system. But the author of the Gītā must have lived at an age when the systems of philosophy were not yet formulated, and in his work we discover the seed from which the Vedānta, the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga systems must have germinated, and it is a gratuitous assump-



tion to speak of our poet having had acquaintance with the Sánkhya system and the Yoga system or with the Vedanta system.

(vii) Mr. Tilak's exposition of the philosophy and religion of the Gîtá is vitiated by the fundamental defect of method, as we said in the last Part. He has treated in the appendix critical and historical problems which should have formed a preliminary to the systematic study of the Gîtá, as it is on the solution of these problems and that of the philosophical and religious questions arising out of them that the nature of the setting and the background of the Gîtá can be truly understood and the interpretation of its thoughts can be properly undertaken. We cannot rightly appreciate the teachings of the Gîtá nor view the various concepts and elements of its Ethics, Metaphysics and Theology in their proper perspective, unless we first of all determine the position of the Gîtá in the history of Indian thought and its relation to the various movements of philosophy and religion that influenced the progress of civilization in India and enriched her spiritual and intellectual life. As it is, Mr. Tilak, like many other commentators, teaches his own philosophy through the Gîtá and reads into the religion of the Gîtá his own pre-conceived notions about the Bhágavata religion. Thus it is that he reverses the natural order of treatment and the chronological relation of facts, and furnishes his work with an historical criticism at the end with a view to support his biased opinions and preconceived ideas.

## SECTION V. CONCLUSION OF PART THREE

342. We have seen that the orthodox view of the sectarian origin of the Epic Mahábhárata as well as the Bhagavad-Gîtá is unfounded. The Kṛṣṇa of the Epic and the Kṛṣṇa of the Gîtá are in all probability the same person, but in any case it is a human hero and sage, a friend, philosopher and guide of the Pándavas, and especially of Arjuna, the most heroic figure among the members of the Royal families, that meets us in the Epic story.

There is no reason to assume that the Mahábhárata and the Gîtá were written by a Vaiṣṇava author, nor that these works were intended to deify a human historical hero of old or to glorify the deeds, sayings and achievements of an incarnation of God.

343. We conclude that (i) Kṛṣṇa is not the central figure of the Mahábhárata in its extant form, nor was he the inspiring deity



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for the author of the original Bhârata, be it Vyâsa or one of his disciples. The Epic, as well as the Gîtâ in its original form, was neither Kṛṣṇaite nor Viṣṇuite, nor was either of these works originally associated with any other sectarian god. The Epic was a narrative-didactic product of the rhapsodic art that flourished in ancient India, and this art still lingers in the present-day rural India in the form of composing and singing heroic ballads as well as in discoursing on and expounding contents of the sacred books with concrete illustrations suited to the ordinary intelligence of the average commoner in our villages on the part of *Bhattakavis* and *Kathakas*. The exposition of morals and narration of tales by the ancient masters of this art, named *Kavis*, *Sabhâ-Kavis*, or *Kathakas*, must have been of a varied nature and manner, depending partly on the individual temperament and predilection of the poets or narrators themselves and partly on the tastes and prejudices of the Princes of the courts and audience, in the presence of whom such artistic-didactic or educative-entertaining performances took place. Even the present Mahâbhârata contains a number of verses and sometimes whole sections which lend themselves to interpretation in favour of the Kauravas, and which naturally depict Kṛṣṇa as partial to his friends, the Pândavas, as cunning and designing, and which otherwise vilify and condemn his character. Kṛṣṇa appears in the Epic more often as an ordinary mortal, albeit an adventurer and an ambitious diplomat, a statesman and counsellor, whose ability was usefully and profitably exploited by the Royal family of Pânduites. He himself was a descendant of the not very aristocratic line of Jâdavas and of the family of Vṛṣṇis and brought up in his early life among the cowherds, or *Gopas*, of a pastoral tribe (later known as Âviras or Âhiras), inhabiting the areas of the Jumna Valley in the district of Muttra. Slowly and gradually was this hero and leader raised to the rank of a Divine personality, on account of his physical prowess combined with scholastic learning (his thorough acquaintance with the Vedas and Upaniṣads being hinted at in several places of the Epic); and this process of deification must have been favoured and accelerated by the fact of his intimate connection with the Pândavas and especially by his friendship with Arjuna, whose heroic courage and skill mainly contributed to the victory of the Pându Princes in the battle of Kurukṣetra under the able guidance of his charioteer, Kṛṣṇa. It was at a subsequent stage that Kṛṣṇa was transformed

by his admirers and disciples into an Avatāra or incarnation of Viṣṇu, the dominant Vedic deity of the time and recognized as supreme God.

We shall be nearer the mark if we hold that the Gītā and its sublime teachings were largely responsible for the spiritualistic movement for monotheistic worship and the ethical conception of fulfilment of duty with a disinterested motive, which led to new developments of Vaiṣṇavism and other sects. In other words, far from the Gītā being a product of Vaiṣṇava religion, our Text is the fountain-head from which Vaiṣṇavas and other sectarian worshippers drank the nectar of a spiritual, rational, ethical, devotional, catholic, liberal and universal religion based on philosophical wisdom.

344. (ii) It follows from our discussion of the views of modern scholars as also from an analysis of the relevant chapters of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Epic that the Gītā was a much earlier work than the Bhāgavata episode in the Mokṣadharma section, and also much older than the Anugītā. There are substantial differences between the contents of the Gītā and those of the Nārāyaṇīya episode of the Epic to afford us sufficient and even convincing grounds to believe that the Gītā was neither a product of the Nārāyaṇa cult nor of the Bhāgavata movement. As we have seen, the name of Nārāyaṇa is not so much as mentioned in the Gītā, although Kṛṣṇa speaks of so many Vedic, Purānic, epic-mythological gods and demi-gods as *Bibhātis* or manifestations of Godhead and the present Epic itself begins with a verse of salutation to Nārāyaṇa, the best of man and the Goddess of learning (Saraswatī). On the other hand, references to a Gītā, known as Hari-Gītā or the Gītā sung by the Lord (Bhagavān), in three different places of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata seem to justify us in maintaining that at the time of the composition of the Nārāyaṇīya episode the Bhagavad-Gītā (assuming that this text is meant by the three references to the Hari-Gītā in the former episode) had already attained sufficient recognition to be quoted as an authority for the monotheistic and spiritual-devotional doctrines of the Nārāyaṇīya or Bhāgavata religion. We have pointed out that the all-comprehensive, harmonizing and liberal teachings of the Gītā lend themselves easily to assimilation and adoption by any schools of philosophy, religion or ethics, as the Gītā has been actually interpreted by the monistic and dualistic

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(Advaita and Dvaita) schools of ancient and mediæval India in their own favour and as it still finds acceptance with all the different sects among the Hindus of modern India. It is not therefore improbable that the new spirit of single-minded devotion to God and disinterested performance of duty, taught in the Gītā, which is so sharply in contrast with the polytheistic and ritualistic culture of the Vedic Aryans, was appreciated by the non-Vedic and non-Aryan or semi-Aryan (mixed) cults and races like the Bhāgavatas, Sāttvatas, Ahiras, Gopas and the rest, with the result that the Gītā was sought to be appropriated by the later Vaiṣṇava and Ekāntin or Nārāyaṇīya and similar sects, while other sects began to write their own denominational Gītās, e.g., Rāma-Gītā, Viṣṇu-Gītā, Śiva-Gītā, Chandi-Gītā, etc. Another cogent reason that leads us to reject the traditional view of the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, advocated by Tilak and other scholars, is the absence of the doctrine of Vyūhas in the Gītā, although Vaiṣṇavas and Bhāgavatas as a rule treat this as a fundamental or essential tenet of their religion, some accepting the doctrine of one Vyūha, some two Vyūhas only, and others adhering to that of three and four Vyūhas. It is now admitted by orthodox scholars, too, that the Gītā was composed earlier than the formulation of the Vyūha doctrine of the Bhāgavatas. We have found reasons to go a step further and hold that the Gītā belongs to the pre-sectarian period of the religious history of India, as it certainly was a product of the pre-systematic period of philosophical thought in ancient India.

345. (iii) The Gītā was in our opinion composed by a Rṣi of the Upaniṣadic age, who must have assimilated from the cultural, moral, religious and intellectual atmosphere of his environments all that was best and noblest in the Vedic and Upaniṣadic lore, and who must have been endowed with a spirit of synthesis and reconciliation which enabled him to understand and appreciate much that was acceptable in the non-Vedic and non-Aryan or non-Brāhmaṇical culture of his times. The poet-philosopher of the Gītā was evidently a Reformer of the religious and social life of the contemporary Vedic-Aryan as well as non-Vedic and non-Aryan people, and while his attitude towards the Vedic rites and ceremonies of the sacrificial religion and worship of many gods was one of protest and revolt, his attitude towards the austere penances and ascetic practices of those who accepted the way of the Vedāntic-Monistic meditation of the Absolute, away from

the worldly life of family and social duties, was equally characterized by a spirit of disapproval and disavowal. He was thus under the moral necessity of adopting a *via media* or golden mean of compromise and harmony in regard to both these extremes and advocating a balanced life of equilibrium, and equal regard for all (*samatvam*), an ideal of the unity and synthesis of the paths of knowledge and action, of meditation or contemplation and duty for duty's sake or disinterested service of the social order (Nişkāma Karma-Yoga), which is one of the unique contributions of the Author of the Bhagavad-Gîtā to Indian moral philosophy. To this may be added the element of *Bhakti* or single-minded devotion and love towards God, leading to love and service of all creatures, including men, which is also a special characteristic of the Gîtā. We have shown that the concept of Bhakti, too, is not foreign to the R̥sis of the Upaniṣads, and that the Gîtā owes its essential doctrines to the spirit of Upaniṣadic teachings. Tradition supports the view that the Gîtā is like the sweet nectar of milk, which was milched, as it were, by Kṛṣṇa as the milkman from all the Upaniṣads as cows, in the presence of a calf which was no other than Arjuna, for the enjoyment and nourishment of the wise. This puts in a nutshell the sum and substance of our proposition that the Gîtā is to all intents and purposes the essence of the Upaniṣads, absorbing and assimilating the true spirit of the old sages and seers of the Upaniṣads, and bringing to a unity the conflicting ideas and concepts of the Upaniṣads as well as the immense variety of the modes of ethical and religious disciplines prevalent in the age of the Upaniṣads. It is not without reason that the Gîtā has been recognized for long as a Manual or code of devotion for the Vedānta school of philosophy, being treated as one of the three *Prasthānas* of the Vedānta along with the Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras.

In our opinion the Gîtā is the first attempt at systematization of the truths of the Upaniṣads, which were intuitively perceived by the mystic-philosophical minds of the forest-hermitages of ancient India, and in this sense alone revealed to their pure hearts by the Divine Spirit. The author of the Gîtā, however, presented to the world only a poetic synthesis of the Upaniṣadic thoughts, as he was himself not a philosopher in the scholastic sense, but a prophet-poet of the type of the R̥sis of the Upaniṣadic culture. The same synthesis was later on consummated in a ratiocinative manner on the philosophical basis by the author of the Vedānta-Sūtras:



## POSITIVE RESULTS OF BOOK I

We thus conclude that the *Gîtá* was virtually Upaniṣadic in origin and spirit, and second of the three *Prasthānas* of the Vedānta school, the Upaniṣads and the Brahmasūtras being the first and the third respectively.

### SECTION VI. POSITIVE RESULTS OF THE BOOK

346. We have surveyed the wide field of Indological researches on the *Gîtá*, and discussed the views of eminent scholars, who have approached and studied this Bible of the Hindus in the light of modern thought. In Part I, we come to the conclusion that there are no serious interpolations in the *Gîtá* from the hands of sectarian and other interested editors or compilers of the Epic Mahābhārata, as supposed by Garbe and other Western scholars, and that notwithstanding probable alterations in the setting of the episode at the time of its incorporation in the body of the Epic and slight additions of one or two minor verses by sectarian enthusiasts here and there, the integrity of our text has not been impaired to an appreciable extent, as held by Telang. In Part II, we have examined the Epic structure as a whole and found reasons to reject the hypothesis of the Mahābhārata being a unitary whole, the work of a single author, who is supposed to have divided the Vedās into four groups, compiled the Mahābhārata, and composed the eighteen Purāṇas as well as the *Gîtá* and the Brahmasūtras. In our view of the Epic it is a miscellaneous collection of heterogeneous materials, that can be grouped under two main divisions, viz., narrative tales with legends of myth and history on the one hand, and didactic, moral, religious and philosophical episodes on the other. We have considered the views of Subbā Rāo, Vaidya, Bankimchandra, Dahlman and Tilak and arrived at the conclusion that the genesis and growth of the Epic literature must have taken a long period and that the *Gîtá* and other episodes must have been inserted in the Mahābhārata at different stages of its development. We have found that the Epic in its original form may have contained a section sermonizing on the evils of the war and Arjuna's despondency on the eve of the battle of Kurukṣetra, reflecting on the dire consequences of the grim tragedy of enormous shedding of human blood, and what is worse, loss of life for his own kith and kin and intimate friends and respected preceptors and elders that inevitably faced him in the event of the action that was to follow.



It was probably on the basis of this section that the Gītā episode, which existed originally as an independent Upaniṣad, was woven into the Epic framework. We have tried to divest the Gītā of its Epic relations and seen that its teachings are universal and eternal truths, which transcend all limitations of space and time, and should be treated apart from their application to the story of the Mahābhārata. In Part III, we have given reasons for our conclusion that the Gītā is not a product of the Kṛṣṇa-cult in any of its variants, viz., Vaiṣṇavism, Bhāgavatism, or Nārāyaṇism, nor of Bāla-Gopāla worship or Rādhā-Śyāma worship, that dominated the history of religious India from epoch to epoch. Finally, we have accepted the position that the Gītā teachings may be traced back to their root in the old Upaniṣads, and that the author of the Gītā was not only thoroughly versed in the Vedic literature and Upaniṣadic thoughts but also acquainted with the extra-Vedic and non-Aryan culture of his times. Thus while the poet of the Gītā aimed at a synthesis of the truths of the Upaniṣads, both metaphysical and ethical, he tried to harmonize the Vedic religion with the non-Brāhmaṇical culture as well.

347. If our method has appeared to be critical and negative and analytic, and our result destructive, rather than positive and constructive and synthetic, it was to some extent inevitable from the nature of our undertaking, which aimed at a study of the Gītā on a rational-comparative basis, utilizing the results of researches made by modern scholars of the East and the West, with a view to forming a proper perspective of the Bhagavad-Gītā in its genesis and background. In tracing the sources of the teachings of the Gītā to the original fountain-head of the Upaniṣads, we have not deviated from the tradition; nor are we beating untrodden ground when we look upon the Gītā as an Upaniṣadic treatise, because even the Epic compilers have repeatedly mentioned the Gītā as *an Upaniṣad sung by God* (the Lord) ("Bhagavad-Gītāsu Upaniṣadsu") at the end of each chapter of our text. It is only when we question the Bhāgavata origin of the Gītā, and also when we refuse to identify the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā with the Viṣṇu of the Vaiṣṇavas, with the Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva of the Bhāgavatas, or with the Gopāla Kṛṣṇa or Śyāma associated with Rādhā and Gopīs of Bṛndāban, that our point of view may be considered as profane or heretical. Notwithstanding the magnitude of the mass of materials we have handled and the long distance we have

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already travelled, it must be confessed that we have only touched the fringe or surface of the vast ground and that the promised land is still far out of sight. The work we are about to finish in this Book forms only an Introduction or Prolegomena, and must be treated as a preparatory study to the philosophy and religion of the Gîtá. The positive results of our labours can be appreciated at their proper worth on the completion of our gigantic task. Meanwhile, it is sufficient to indicate the path along which our future journey must lie.

348. Scholars like Sir Rámkrṣṇa Gopál Bhándárkar, K. T. Talang, Dr. Hem Chandra Ray Chaudhury, and Pandit S. N. Tattvabhūṣan have hit upon the right line of treatment of the philosophy and religion of the Gîtá in connecting the thoughts of the Gîtá with those of the Upaniṣads. The teachings of the Gîtá cannot really be understood apart from their setting in the Upaniṣadic background. This will be apparent to anyone who is familiar with the principal Upaniṣads. A correct interpretation of the philosophical, religious and ethical doctrines of the Gîtá will therefore involve an understanding of their background in the atmosphere of the Upaniṣads, as well as a consideration of the age of the Gîtá and its relation to the various old Upaniṣads, prose and metrical. One has to reconstruct from the 700 verses of the poem itself a picture of the religious atmosphere, the social surrounding and moral ideas, the intellectual and cultural environments, in the midst of which the poet-philosopher of the Gîtá must have been born and brought up. This preliminary task will require a separate Book for adequate treatment, viz., "The Gîtá and its Background" (title of the second volume).

349. Then, we should be in a position to present a complete interpretation of the Gîtá in the light of its central theme which supplies the keynote for grasping the fundamental unity of the contents of the poem and the essential spirit of the teachings of this Song Celestial—the spirit that pervades the entire poem and penetrates each and every verse and chapter of the Gîtá. It will appear according to our interpretation that there is no contradiction or inconsistency among the various parts of the text, but they all are organically related to one another as well as to the whole. In relation to this central theme and essential spirit, all the metaphysical doctrines, ethical precepts and religious practices upheld in the Gîtá are capable of being threaded together like pearls in a

necklace, to quote an apt simile from the Gītā (" *sutre maṇigandīva* "). It will appear to a dispassionate and disinterested reader of this sacred poem that its teachings are characterized by rationality, spirituality, catholicity, universality and a spirit of liberalism—features and qualities that are rarely combined within a small compass so beautifully in any other text of the world-literature. It is perhaps the only religious-philosophical poem that has the unique character of comprehending, harmonizing, synthesizing, and reconciling all conflicting claims and interests of knowledge and feeling, of duty and desire, of wisdom and action, of ethics, philosophy and religion. It is this character of combining a sound system of liberal education and culture with faith and devotion of spiritual life, laying stress on an all-round development of the body, mind and spirit, on all-sided perfection in knowledge, love and disinterested performance of duty, that has made the Gītā a universal scripture for all sects of Hindus as well as a unique treasure-house of truths on the ideal of spiritual life and its realization, not only for the civilized nations of the world, but for all the races of mankind. The interpretation of the Gītā from this standpoint will itself require a separate volume. (Vol. III, " Teachings of the Gītā.")

350. Dr. Hem Chandra Ray Chaudhury points out that while enumerating the *Bībhūtis* or manifestations of God, Kṛṣṇa declares himself to be "the Sāma Veda among the Vedas" (G. X. 22), implying thereby that the Sāma Veda was the best and highest among the Vedas. I agree entirely with this learned Professor and believe that Kṛṣṇa or the teacher of the Gītā must have belonged to the Sāma Veda school of the Vedic social and religious hierarchy. Now, it is very significant that Chhándogya Upaniṣad, which is a Sāma Veda treatise, mentions one Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, as receiving spiritual instruction from the Ṛṣi Ghora, son of Angiras, and practising a philosophical religion, laying stress on moral discipline and symbolizing the control of inner life as a form of sacrifice, in which penances, gifts, rectitude, non-violence and truthfulness (*tapas, dānam, ārjāva, ahimsā, satyavacanam*) are to be offered as sacrificial fees (Chhánd. III. 17, 4). In this chapter of the Upaniṣad, we may find the germs of the process of internalizing and spiritualizing the external rites and ceremonies of the Vedic religion of sacrifices, which appears to have reached its sublimest culmination in the teachings of the Gītā. Even the germ of the

Bhakti movement will be found in the very first chapter of the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, where the name of God (*Om* or *Udgîtha*) is proclaimed to be the essence of all essences (*rasánám rasatamah*) and the Sáma Veda is regarded as the essence of all Védas. As a matter of fact, throughout this Upaniṣad, pervades the spirit of seeing every object and every phenomenon in the universe as a part or aspect of sacrificial ritual connected with the Sáma Veda, and of treating the whole life of man as in tune with the hymns of the Sáma Veda, or songs in praise of God. The conception of God or Supreme Self as the most beloved, as dearer indeed than one's son, dearer than wealth and dearer than everything else (*tadetat Preyah putráṭ preyovitvát preyo anyasmát sarvasmát*) was already present in the philosophy of Yájñavalkya which goes so far as to assert that it is not for the sake of son, or wealth, or cattle, etc., that the son or wealth or cattle, etc., is dear to man, but it is for the sake of the Self that the son and wealth and cattle become dear to us. The Self is said to be the sweetest essence of all (*rasovai sa*); and parallel to the Christian precept, "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and everything else shall be added unto thee," we have the Upaniṣadic injunction in the Brhadáranyaka and elsewhere that the Self alone is to be seen, heard, contemplated and meditated on, verily everything else is known when the Self is seen, thought of and understood. From these germs of knowing and meditating on the Self as the best beloved, as the sweetest essence of things, as dearer than son and wife and everything else, as the one thing needful, on the attainment of which all else that is worth having is attained, the spiritual-devotional religion of whole-hearted love to God (Bhakti) must have originated and developed.

351. Kṛṣṇa, son of Devakī, and disciple of Ghora Ángirasa mentioned in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad, may be the inspiring genius behind the whole spiritualistic movement associated with the Vaiṣṇava, Bhágavata, Sáttvata, or Nárayaṇīya religions. Even the Bhágavata Purāṇa, which belongs to a much later age and which forms the foundation of the worship of Gopála-Kṛṣṇa (Child-God or Baby-God) and of the Gopī cult, presents the picture of Kṛṣṇa as a reformer of the Vedic religion, as a protestant or non-conformist among the Gopas, Ábhīras or pastoral tribes, as he is said to have revolted against the Bráhmaṇical religion based on sacrificial homage to the Vedic god Indra, and advocated the



simpler and more natural religion of love and service not only of man, but of cows and monkeys and other fellow-creatures. The picture of Braja-Līlā, or Kṛṣṇa's early life of sports with the boys and girls of cowherd families, at the rural pastures of Bṛndāban, as described in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other Vaiṣṇava scriptures, gives one the impression that Kṛṣṇa was the natural leader of a healthy band of youths who lived and played vigorously in the open air and enriched their mind with observation on the life and growth of plants and flowers and fruits and of birds and beasts of jungles in the neighbourhood. Under the guidance of the youthful leader, Kṛṣṇa, these cowherd boys not only enjoyed innocent pleasures of dancing and playing hide and seek with their village sisters in the moonlit nights in the woods and plains of the Jumna Valley, but also engaged themselves occasionally in rural welfare works like cleaning and purifying the tanks that supplied water for drinking, and killing snakes and cranes and other pests that proved a menace to the health and safety of the villagers. Thus Kṛṣṇa meets us in the Upanisads, in the Purāṇas, and in the Epic in very different forms and characters, and it is next to impossible to prove or ascertain whether they were all one and the same person, and whether different persons bearing the same name were not identified with one another at later periods. Under the spell of a theory of Incarnation, even as late as the fifteenth century Śree Chaitanya of Navadvīpa, born of a Brahmin (Mīśra) family of Sylhet, better known as Nīmāi the Ascetic (Sannyāsi), a great scholar and devoted worshipper of Kṛṣṇa, was raised by his followers to the rank of an Avatāra and even identified with Kṛṣṇa during his lifetime. A whole theology was built up on the story of Rādhā's passionate love for Kṛṣṇa giving an occasion to the latter's desire to experience the former's love in his own life and thus to assume the form of a new incarnation in the person of Nīmāi, as Lord Gaurāṅga. We have the same tendency manifest in a Brahmānanda Keshab Chandra Sen here and a Paramhansa Rāmkrṣṇa there being elevated to the position of an Avatāra in our times, the latest example of Juga-Avatāra being Mahātmā Gāndhī. Perhaps that very psycho-sociological and religio-philosophical necessity, inherent in the Hīndu mind, led to the deification of Kṛṣṇa of the Epic Mahābhārata, and his identification in turn with the Vedic god Viṣṇu, the cosmic god Nārāyaṇa, the Sāttvata god Vāsudeva and the cowboy Kṛṣṇa, the leader of the youth movement among



the pastoral tribes of Br̥ndában and Muttra on the banks of the Jumna.

352. I have nothing but admiration for the eminent scholars and thinkers like Bankimchandra Chatterjee, Bipin Chandra Pal and others who have endeavoured to reconstruct the life of Kṛṣṇa as an ideal man and hero out of the fragmentary legends and myths and semi-historical mass of materials supplied by the Mahábhārata, Harivaṃśa, Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Bhāgavata Purāṇa and other scriptures of the Hindus. With all my highest regard for their scholarship and for the grand conception of presenting the picture of an ideal heroic personality, acquiring all-round culture and all-sided perfection—physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual—the picture of an object of worship for the educated Hindus, which might be placed on the same level with, and even on a higher level than, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, and such other Founders and Prophets of other religions, I must confess that such attempts seem to me to represent only a pious wish that facts and fictions might coincide, that mythological figures might be as vividly real as living historical persons, so that the masses as well as the educated classes of Hindus might be able to fix their eye of faith on a central Ideal of a historical personality like Buddha and Christ who serve as a god-man for the Buddhists and Christians. But these constructions cannot be placed on a scientific (rational and wissenschaftlich) basis of certainty, nor established on historical facts beyond the reach of doubts and criticism. The orthodox Hindu scholars were in the habit of ascribing reality to fiction and identifying the Ideal and Rational with the living Actual in the past. Probably the same tendency persists in some of the modern Indian scholars. We maintain that the Gītā belongs to a much earlier period than that of sectarian associations of ancient India and is altogether free from sectarian controversies that bristle in the religious literature of mediæval India. The theory of Incarnation as well as the doctrine of love and devotion that meets us in the Gītā can very well be interpreted and explained in the light of the Upaniṣadic conception of Brahma or the Absolute and Param Átmá or Supreme Self which is at the root of a personal God (*Vide* Part I, Chapter II, Section II).

353. We do not think the question of identity of the several Kṛṣṇas in the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Mahábhārata, and the Purāṇas can be solved with certainty at the present stage of Indological

studies, but on an *a priori* logical ground, we are constrained to admit that Kṛṣṇa, the teacher of the Bhagavad-Gītā, must have been at once a sage, an able counsellor, a valiant warrior, a well-practised Yogi and sagacious man of action, a lover and lovable and beloved popular personality, as the teachings of the Gītā could not have been so sublime and beautiful and at the same time so practical and efficient, had it not been a fact that its author, or the inspiring deliverer of its gospels, must have passed through varied experiences of life, and himself practised the art of concentration and meditation natural to a sage and scholar, the art of fighting the battle of life like a valiant Kṣatriya warrior, and the art of Yōga which could harmonize conflicting views, reconcile the irreconcilables, and bring together into a systematic unity various modes of spiritual culture, ethical disciplines, religious practices and ways of thinking on abstruse philosophical subjects. As will be recognized by all, it is only life that begets life, and even a political or social theory can never drop from heaven, but always evolves out of living experiences of a thinking and acting individual, who must adapt himself to his social environment and react on the various forces that encounter him from the outer world as well as from his inner life. As observed by Bankimchandra in the opening lines of his "Kṛṣṇa Charita," the name of Kṛṣṇa has become a household word with the Hindus, it has penetrated into the heart of every man, be he a village shopkeeper, a wayfarer or a beggar, or a street-singer in a town. Such an enormous influence could not have been exerted on the minds of millions of educated and cultured Hindus and illiterate masses of rural India for so many centuries, unless Kṛṣṇa were more than a fiction, unless he were an historical person, a man of genius with super-human powers and Divine excellences. On this line of *a priori* reasoning one may well argue that the ideal wise man, the perfect man of all-round culture, the Yogi who preached the gospel of harmonizing wisdom and action, enjoyment and renunciation, could not be pictured only as a Ṛṣi who composed Vedic hymns, and was versed in Upaniṣadic learning, but must also have played truant with village maids and enjoyed sports and tended cattle, and studied plant life and animal life with cowboys in pastoral walks, and thereby developed his muscles and nerves and brain, as well as his mind and heart and soul. Further, the life of the teacher of the philosophy and religion of the Gītā must have been en-

riched by receiving training in the art of fighting and wrestling, wielding weapons and shooting arrows like a Kṣātrīyas hero in the company of the Princes of Royal families. Hence the psychological, nay, the moral necessity of combining the various persons of the same name, Kṛṣṇa, into a single personality. It is thus that Kṛṣṇa of the Chhándogya Upaniṣad has been identified with the Kṛṣṇa of the Mahábhárata, and both with Kṛṣṇa of the Bhágavata Puráṇa, and it is thus that the continuity of life of the disciple of Ghora Āngirasa in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad with that of the disciple of the sage Garga or Sándipani Muni in the later Vaiṣṇava literature has been advocated, and the identity of the son of Devakī and Váśudeva in the city of Muttra with the son of Yaśodá and Nanda, the head of the Gopas of Br̥ndábana, and the identity of the Kṛṣṇa of Br̥ndábana and Muttra with the Kṛṣṇa of Dwáraka, Prabhás, of Hastiná, Indraprastha, of Raibatak and Kurukṣetra, has been justified.

SECTION VII. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE

354. Prof. Rádhákṛṣṇan and Dr. S. N. Das Gupta of Calcutta University, who have made valuable contributions to the study of Indian thought, have not been mentioned by me in the foregoing chapters of this Book, because their works on Indian Philosophy had not been published when the main body of the manuscript on the *Bhagavad-Gítá and Modern Scholarship* was finished. Both these scholars have accepted the orthodox view of the Bhágavata origin of the Gítá, and followed the line of arguments of Telang, Bhándárkar, Tilak, and Hem Chandra Ray Choudhury, as regards the date of the Gítá and its relation to the Upaniṣads, to the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems, to Buddhism, Christianity and the Bhágavata religion or Vaiṣṇavism. We shall consider their views in the next two Books, when we deal with the age of the Gítá and the interpretation of its teachings. Here I would simply quote some of their opinions which seem to confirm the views advanced by me, and make a few observations on the points where I differ from them.

355. Prof. Rádhákṛṣṇan's theory of the genesis of the Mahábhárata, as quoted below, is substantially in accord with our contention that the Great Epic of India passed through several stages of development.

It is now agreed that the present Mahábhárata is an enlarged edition of an earlier tradition called the Bhárata. According to the opening

chapter of the Mahābhārata, the Bhārata Samhitā, as originally composed by Vyāsa, contained 24,000 verses, though Vyāsa enlarged it into a work of 6,000,000 verses, of which only a lakh now exist. But even this Bhārata must have been based on lays, ballads and versified traditions of the events of the war. Ballads and songs recording the doughty deeds of great heroes, singing the praises of great warriors, the beauty of queens, the pomp of court, could have been composed only when the echoes of the war were in men's ears. From the earliest times in the west of India, in the land of the Kuru-Pāñchālas, and in the east, in the land of the Kosalas, the local bards were singing the heroic deeds of their tribal heroes. These songs could never have been fixed, since they were orally transmitted, and should have undergone modification in each age. Brāhmanism had to reckon with these traditions, thoughts and aspirations which were not its own. Bhārata is the first attempt at effecting a reconciliation between the culture of the Aryans and the mass of fact and fiction, history and mythology which it encountered. Being nearer the war, it must have been a simple heroic poem, with not much of didactic purpose or philosophical synthesis. It might have been composed about 1100 B.C. or so.<sup>1</sup> Soon new material accumulated, and the task of assimilation became well-nigh impossible. Yet, it was attempted, and the Mahābhārata is the result. It bears on its face the unsatisfactory alliance between the folk-songs and the superstition of the new communities and the religious spirit of the Aryans. Vyāsa made the best of a bad bargain and wove into a colossal poem the floating mass of epic tradition, hero-worship, stirring scenes of strife and warfare, dressing up the new gods of uncertain origin and doubtful morality in the "cast-off clothes" of the Vedic deities.<sup>2</sup> It is clear that while the ballad stage is the first, the Bhārata is the next. It must have been composed even when the religion was ritualistic and polytheistic. Those portions of the Mahābhārata which inculcate the worship of the Vedic gods, Indra and Agni, are the relics of this stage. Women in those days possessed great freedom and caste was not rigorous. There was no element of sectarianism, no philosophy of the Atman or theory of the *avatāras*. Kṛṣṇa appears as a historical character. The next stage of thought represents the period when the Greeks (Yavanas), the Parthians (Pahlavas) and the Scythians (Śakas) entered the country. We have now the *trimūrti* conception that Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva are different forms of the One Supreme, fulfilling the different functions of creation, preservation and destruction. The deeds of might originally attributed to Indra are now transferred to Viṣṇu and in some cases to Śiva. *What was originally a heroic poem becomes a Brāhmanical work, and is transformed into a theistic treatise in which Viṣṇu or Śiva is elevated to the rank of the Supreme.*

According to Rādhākṛṣṇan, the Bhagavad-Gītā perhaps belongs to this stage, although the philosophical portions of the Epic

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Vaidya fixes the date of the earlier work at about 3100 B.C.

<sup>2</sup> It is very doubtful whether any one individual can be credited with the authorship of the work.



should be assigned as a rule to the last stage. I should correct this statement with the modification that the Gítá was perhaps inserted in the Mahábhárata during this stage as an episode therein, but the poem must have existed in the form of an Upaniṣad long before.

356. As to the relations between the Upaniṣads, the Gítá and the Mahábhárata, Prof. Rádhákṛṣṇan says :—

When Bráhmaṇism ceased to be the religion of a few, by assimilation of the indigenous beliefs and religious practices of its surroundings, a philosophic restatement of the ancient wisdom became necessary. Many efforts to combine the absolutism of the Upaniṣads with the theistic beliefs of the people in a synthetic whole were made, though not with any genuine principle of reconciliation. *The author of the Bhagavata-Gítá, with true speculative insight and synthetic power, initiates a new philosophical and religious synthesis, which forms the background of the theistic systems of a later day. Containing within itself productions of different dates and authorship, the Mahábhárata has become a miscellaneous encyclopædia of history and mythology, politics, law, theology and philosophy. (Italics are ours.)*

So far as the author of the Gítá is concerned there can be no doubt about his true speculative insight and synthetic power, and we have always maintained that the poet-prophet-philosopher of this sacred song initiated a new philosophical and religious synthesis, but we cannot find in the Gítá any attempt at popularizing Bráhmaṇism, nor any compromise between the Absolutism of the Upaniṣads and the popular beliefs and practices of religion. As we have shown, the thoughts of the Upaniṣads are neither purely monistic-pantheistic nor purely theistic-dualistic, and the Gítá bréathes throughout in the atmosphere of the Ṛṣis of the earlier Upaniṣads. This view is supported by Rádhákṛṣṇan himself when he says that the philosophical background of the Gítá is taken from the Upaniṣads.

357. As to the problem whether the Gítá was originally a part of the Epic or a later interpolation, Rádhákṛṣṇan cites the opinions of Wheeler and Telang, and generally inclines to the orthodox view like Tilak. But he says :—

“Since it forms a part of the Mahábhárata, it is sometimes doubted whether it is an interpolation added to the text at a later period. . . .

Internal references to the Bhagavad-Gítá in the Mahábhárata which clearly indicate that from the time of the composition of the Mahábhárata, the Gítá has been looked upon as a genuine part of it. (Tilak's *Gítá rahasa*.) (Adiparva, 2, 69 ; I. 179 ; 2, 247.)

## BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ AND MODERN SCHOLARSHIP

The stylistic resemblances between the Gītā and the Mahābhārata show that they belong to one whole. In the main views about other systems of philosophy and religion, there is also agreement. *Karma* is preferred to *akarma* (B.G., chapter III; Vanaparva, chapter XXII). The attitude to the Vedic sacrifices, the statements of the order of creation (Śāntiparva, 267; Manu, chapter III). (B.G., chapters VII and VIII; Śāntiparva 231), the account of the Sāṅkhya theory of *gunas* (B.G., XIV and XV; Aswamedhaparva, 36-39; Śāntiparva, 285 and 300-311), the Patañjali's Yoga (B.G. VI; Śāntiparva, 239 and 300), description of Viśvarūpa (Udyogaparva, 170; Aswamedhaparva, 55; Śāntiparva, 339; and Vanaparva, 99) are more or less the same. Nor can we say that the principles of reconciliation are peculiar to the Gītā.

- Even when we assign the Bhagavad-Gītā to the Mahābhārata as a genuine part of it, we cannot be sure of its date, since there are products of different periods included in it."

Does this not confirm our view that the Gītā was a later interpolation in the Epic ?

358. While agreeing with Rādhākṛṣṇan that the Gītā does not throw overboard the authority of the Vedas and that Bhakti in the Gītā is a direct development of the *upāsana* of the Upaniṣads, we have found reasons to differ from him and others who hold that the Bhāgavata religion was the immediate stimulus to the synthesis of the Bhagavad-Gītā. Nor do I accept the view of Rādhākṛṣṇan about the post-Buddhistic origin of the Gītā. It will be seen that the protest against the absolute authority of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇical sacrifices had already begun in the old Upaniṣads, which contain germs of a spiritual religion based on intuition and monotheistic fervour. The poet of the Gītā continues the evolution of thought of the Upaniṣads and enriches the philosophy and religion of the Vedic tradition with his deeper insight as well as with experiences of other cultures of his times. We shall discuss the date of the Gītā in the next Book and justify the views of competent scholars in favour of the pre-Buddhistic date of the composition of the Gītā.

359. Lastly, it is gratifying that the view of Rādhākṛṣṇan concerning the relation of the Gītā to the Sāṅkhya Yoga, as quoted below, confirms our position on the subject :—

The terms Sāṅkhya-Yoga when they occur in the Gītā do not represent the classical schools of Sāṅkhya and Yoga, but only the reflective and meditative methods of gaining salvation. Besides, during the period of the Gītā there was no clear-cut distinction between the Sāṅkhya-Yoga

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on one side and the Vedánta on the other, which alone can justify Garbe's interpretation.

360. Dr. S. N. Das Gupta's treatment of the Gítá in his *History of Indian Philosophy* has much in common with our way of interpretation. He considers the Gítá to be a product of the pre-systematic period of Indian philosophy, which confirms our view. He says :—

It is from the point of view of this mystic consciousness that the Gítá seems to reconcile the apparently philosophically irreconcilable elements. The Gítá was probably written at a time when philosophical views had not definitely crystallized into hard-and-fast systems of thought, and when the distinguishing philosophical niceties, scholarly disputations, the dictates of argument, had not come into fashion. The Gítá, therefore, is not to be looked upon as a properly schemed system of philosophy, but as a manual of right conduct and right perspective of things in the light of mystical approach to God in self-resignation, devotion, friendship and humility.

361. As regards Kṛṣṇa of the Mahábhárata and Vásudeva, supposed to be the founder of the Bhágavata system, Das Gupta accepts the findings of Dr. Hem Chandra Ray Chaudhury, as quoted below :—

It is probable, as Dr. Ray Chaudhury points out, that Kṛṣṇa, the son of Devakī, was the same as Vásudeva, the founder of the Bhágavata system ; for he is referred to in the Ghata-játaka as being Kanhayana, or Kanha, which is the same as Kṛṣṇa, as Devakī-putra, and in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad III. 17, 4 also he is referred to as being Devakī-putra. In the Ghata-játaka Kṛṣṇa is spoken of as being a warrior, whereas in the Chhándogya Upaniṣad he is a pupil of Ghora Ángirasa, who taught him a symbolic sacrifice in which penances (tapas), gifts (dána), sincerity (árjava), non-injury (ahimsá), and truthfulness (satya-vacana), may be regarded as sacrificial fees (dakṣiṇá). The Mahábhárata II. 317 describes Kṛṣṇa both as a sage who performed long courses of asceticism in Gandhamádana, Puṣkara and Badari, and as a great warrior. He is also described in the Mahábhárata as Vásudeva, Devakīputra and as the chief of the Sáttvatas, and his divinity is everywhere acknowledged there. But it is not possible to assert definitely that Vásudeva, Kṛṣṇa the warrior and Kṛṣṇa the sage were not three different persons who in the Mahábhárata were unified and identified, though it is quite probable that all the different strands of legends refer to one identical person.

If the three Kṛṣṇas refer to one individual Kṛṣṇa, he must have lived long before Buddha, as he is alluded to in the Chhándogya, and his Guru Ghora Ángirasa is also alluded to in the Kauṣitakibráhmaṇa XXX. 6 and the Kaṭhákā-saṃhitá I. 1, which are pre-Buddhistic works. Jaina

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tradition refers to Kṛṣṇa as being anterior to Pārśvanatha (817 B.C.) and on this evidence Dr. Ray Chaudhury thinks that he must have lived long before the closing years of the ninth century B.C.

We have already given some *a priori* grounds for the orthodox belief in the identity of several Kṛṣṇas as one and the same person.

362. From the description of the Nārāyaṇīya section in the Mahābhārata (XII. 348), says Das Gupta, it seems that the doctrine of the Gītā was believed to be the *Ekdāntin* doctrine originally taught by Nārāyaṇa to Brahmā, Nārada and others long before the recital of the Gītā by Kṛṣṇa in the Mahābhārata battle. We have already discussed the relation of the Gītā to the Nārāyaṇīya section and found reasons to differ from Tilak's views in the matter, and our criticism of Tilak's opinions applies to Das Gupta as well. It is, however, interesting to observe that the Bhāgavata religion was traditionally recognized to be of non-Vedic origin, and Das Gupta's discussion of Jamunācārya's views on the subject, as quoted below, makes it clear how attempts were made by interested sectarian writers from time to time to secure recognition for the Nārāyaṇa cult of the Bhāgavatas in the fold of the Vedic and Brāhmanical culture. Das Gupta writes :—

As Yamuna points out, the opponents of the Bhāgavata school urge that, since the ordinary Brāhmanic initiation is not deemed a sufficient qualification for undertaking the worship of Viṣṇu, and since special and peculiar forms of initiation and ceremonial performances are necessary, it is clear that Bhāgavata forms of worship are not Vedic in their origin. The fourteen Hindu sciences, viz., the six Vedāṅgas on Vedic pronunciation (śikṣā), ritual (kalpa), grammar (vyākaraṇa), metre (chandas), astronomy (jyotiṣa), lexicography (nirukta), the four Vedas, Mimāṃsā, argumentative works or Philosophy (nyāya-vistāra), the mythologies (purāṇa), and rules of conduct (dharma-śāstra) do not refer to the Pañcharātra scriptures as being counted in their number. So the Bhāgavata or the Pañcharātra scriptures are of non-Vedic origin. But Yamuna contends that, since Nārāyaṇa is the supreme god, the Bhāgavata literature, which deals with his worship, must be regarded as having the same sources as the Vedas ; the Bhāgavatas also have the same kind of outer dress as the Brāhmins and the same kinds of lineage. He further contends that, though Sāttvata means an outcast, yet sāttvata is a different word from sāttvata, which means a devotee of Viṣṇu. Moreover, not all Bhāgavatas take professional priestly duties and the worshipping of images for their livelihood ; for there are many who worship the images through pure devotion. It is very easy to see that the above defence of the Bhāgavatas, as put forward by one of the best advocates, Yamunācārya, is very tame and tends to suggest very strongly



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that the Bhágavata sect was non-Vedic in its origin and that image-worship, image-making, image-repairing and temple building had their origin in that particular sect. Yet throughout the entire scriptures of the Pañcharátra school there is the universal and uncontested tradition that it is based on the Vedas. But its difference from the Vedic path is well-known. Yamuna himself refers to a passage (Agamapramanya, p. 51), where it is said that Sándilya, not being able to find his desired end (*puruśártha*) in all the four Vedas, produced this scripture. The Gítá itself often describes the selfish aims of sacrifices and Kṛṣṇa urges Arjuna to rise above the level of the Vedas. It seems, therefore, that the real connection of the Pañcharátra literature is to be found in the fact that it originated from Vāsudeva or Viṣṇu, who is the supreme God from whom the Vedas themselves were produced. Thus the Īśvara-samhitá (I. 24-26) explains the matter, and states that the Bhágavata literature is the great root of the Veda tree, and the Vedas themselves are but trunks of it, and the followers of Yoga are but its branches. Its main purpose is to propound the superiority of Vāsudeva, who is the root of the universe and identical with the Vedas.

363. The relation between the Bhágavata scripture and the Upaniṣad and the Gítá is clearly set forth by this author of *History of Indian Philosophy* in the following manner :—

The affinity of this school of thought to the Upaniṣad school becomes apparent when it is considered that Vāsudeva was regarded in this system as the highest Brahman. The three other *vyúhas* were but subordinate manifestations of him, after the analogy of *prajña*, *virat*, *viśva* and *taijasa* in monistic Vedānta. Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya does not seem to know of the four *vyúhas*, as it mentions only Vāsudeva and Saṃkar-ṣaṇa ; and the Gítá knows only Vāsudeva. It seems, therefore, that the *vyúha* doctrine did not exist at the time of the Gítá and that it evolved gradually in later times. It is seen from a passage of the Mahābhārata, already referred to, that there were different variations of the doctrine and that some accepted one *vyúha*, others two, others three and others four. It is very improbable that, if the *Vyúha* doctrine was known at the time of the Gítá, it should not have been mentioned therein. For the Gítá was in all probability the earliest work of the *Ekāntin* school of the Bhágavatas. It is also interesting in this connection to note that the name of Nārāyaṇa is never mentioned in the Gítá and Vāsudeva is only identified with Viṣṇu, the chief of the Ādityas.

I do not accept the suggestion of Dr. Das Gupta that the Gítá was in all probability the earliest work of the *Ekāntin* school and the Bhágavatas, as the Gítá was not in our view a Bhágavata work at all, but on the contrary our position in regard to the Gítá, that it was originally a non-sectarian Upaniṣad, but later on appropriated by the Bhágavatas, Vaiṣṇavas or some such sect and inserted in the Mahābhārata perhaps to further the interests of

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their movement, is confirmed by Bhándárkar's valuable remarks cited by Das Gupta as below :—

Thus Sir R. G. Bhándárkar says, 'It will be seen that the date of the Bhagavad-Gîtā, which contains no mention of the *vyūhas* or personified forms, is much earlier than those of the inscriptions, the Niddesa and Patañjali, i.e., it was composed not later than the beginning of the fourth century before the Christian era ; how much earlier it is difficult to say. At the time when the Gîtā was conceived and composed the identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa had not yet taken place, nor had the fact of his being an incarnation of Viṣṇu come to be acknowledged, as appears from the work itself. . . . ' Viṣṇu is alluded to as the chief of the Ādityas and not as the supreme being, and Vāsudeva was Viṣṇu in this sense, as mentioned in chapter 10, because the best thing of a group or class is represented to be his *vibhūti* or special manifestation.

364. The pre-Buddhistic origin of the Gîtā, as surmised by Telang, has been upheld by Das Gupta with cogent reasons, and these are worth quoting in view of the contrary opinion put forward by Rādhākṛṣṇan :—

Mr. Telang in the introduction to his translation of the Bhagavad-Gîtā points out that the Bhagavad-Gîtā does not know anything that is peculiarly Buddhistic. Attempt has also been made to prove that the Gîtā not only does not know anything Buddhistic, but that it also knows neither the accepted Sāṅkhya philosophy nor the Yoga of Patañjali's Yoga-sūtra. This together with some other secondary considerations noted above, such as the non-identification of Vāsudeva with Nārāyaṇa and the non-appearance of the *vyūha* doctrine, seems to be a very strong reason for holding the Gîtā to be in its general structure pre-Buddhistic. The looseness of its composition, however, always made it easy to interpolate occasional verses. Since there is no other consideration which might lead us to think that the Gîtā was written after the Brahmasūtras, the verse "*Brahma-sutra-padais caiva hetu-madbhir viniścitaḥ*" has to be either treated as an interpolation or interpreted differently. Śāṅkara also thought that the Brahmasūtras referred to the Gîtā as an old sacred writing (*smṛti*), and this tallies with other considerations regarding the antiquity of the Gîtā.

Incidentally it may also be mentioned that the style of the Gîtā is very archaic ; it is itself called an Upaniṣad, and there are many passages in it which are found in the Iśā (Iśā 5, cf. the Bhagavad-Gîtā, XIII. 15 and IV. 29), Mundaka (Mund. II. 1, 2, cf. Gîtā XIII. 15), Kathaka (II. 15, II. 18 and 19 and II. 7, cf. the Gîtā VIII. 11 ; II. 20 and 29) and other Upaniṣads. We are thus led to assign to the Gîtā a very early date, and since there is no definite evidence to show that it was post-Buddhistic, and since also the Gîtā does not contain the slightest reference to anything Buddhistic, I venture to suggest that it is pre-Buddhistic, however unfashionable such a view may appear. An

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examination of the Gîtá from the point of view of language also shows that it is archaic and largely un-Páñinean.

365. Our view of the pre-systematic origin of the philosophical teachings of the Gîtá and our criticism of the so-called Sāñkhya origin of the Gîtá, as held by Garbe, is strongly supported by the following quotation from Das Gupta :—

It is not necessary here to enter into any long discussion in refuting Garbe's view that the Gîtá was originally a work on Sāñkhya lines (written in the first half of the second century B.C.), which was revised on Vedāntic lines and brought to its present form in the second century A.D. ; for I suppose it has been amply proved that, in the light of the uncontradicted tradition of the Mahābhārata and the Pañcharātra literature, the Gîtá is to be regarded as a work of the Bhāgavata school, and an internal analysis of the work also shows that the Gîtá is neither an ordinary Sāñkhya nor a Vedānta work, but represents some older system wherein the views of an earlier school of Sāñkhya are mixed up with Vedāntic ideas different from the Vedānta as interpreted by Śāñkara. The arbitrary and dogmatic assertion of Garbe, that he could clearly separate the original part of the Gîtá from the later additions, need not, to my mind, be taken seriously.

366. Finally, Das Gupta has examined the Gîtá from the point of view of language to show that it is archaic and un-Páñinean, and after noticing the numerous instances of grammatical irregularities, as pointed out by V. K. Rajwade in his article in the Bhándárkar Commemoration Volume, which may be regarded as contributory evidence in favour of the antiquity of the Gîtá, he concludes :—

The Gîtá may have been a work of the Bhāgavata school written long before the composition of the Mahābhārata, and may have been written on the basis of the Bhārata legend, on which the Mahābhārata was based. It is not improbable that the Gîtá, which summarized the older teachings of the Bhāgavata school, was incorporated into the Mahābhārata, during one of its revisions, by reason of the sacredness that it had attained at the time.

Without accepting the Bhāgavata origin of the Gîtá, we may concede that this conclusion of Das Gupta is in accord with the positive results achieved by our investigations, viz., (i) that the Gîtá was written long before the composition of the Mahābhārata, (ii) that the Gîtá was a later interpolation in the body of the Epic made by a Bhāgavata editor, who may have, to some extent, revised the Episode so inserted in order to fit it into the Epic surroundings as well as to promote his sectarian propaganda.

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